Commentary
August 1997

Democracies and Double Standards
Robert Kagan

My War With Allen Ginsberg
Norman Podhoretz

The Seduction of Steven Eskanazzi—A Story
David Gelernter

The Colonel and the Lady
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No More Great Composers?
Terry Teachout

Books in Review

Laura Manuelidis • Franklin Hunt • Jon D. Levenson
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Vol. 104 · August 1997 · No. 2

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Advertising Director Sarah M. Stern
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COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022 Telephone: (212) 751-4000. Fax: (212) 751-1174. E-MAIL: Commentary@compuserve.com. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Letters intended for publication may be edited. Single copy is $3.75; $39 a year, 2 years $72, 3 years $105—Add $8.00 per year for all foreign subscriptions, including Canada and Latin America. For subscription information call: (800) 829-6270—Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Copyright © 1997 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Reader's Guide*, *Book Review Digest*, and elsewhere—Available in reference systems produced by University Microfilms International (800) 521-0600 and Information Access Company (800) 227-8431—U.S. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Printed in the U.S.A.

COMMENTARY is a member of The Leadership Network. (212) 725-2106; Fax (212) 779-1928.

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Commentary
August 1997

Letters from Readers

Health Care

To the Editor:

In his article, "The Price of Managed Care" [May], Bruce A. Barron was right on target in regard to the role of teaching hospitals in creating the health-care crisis. However, he did not stress how medical practitioners contributed to the problem. Health-maintenance organizations (HMO's) are the reaction to many in the medical profession who thought the good times would never end. But while this was happening, the voices of all those who are now protesting were strangely silent.

The opportunity to do something about health care was missed by the Clinton administration. The time was right, the opportunity present, but, because of rigid ideology and hubris, it was missed. The big winners are the HMO owners/operators and the malpractice lawyers who will be extremely busy. The big losers are, first and foremost, the patients and then the hospital staffs—nurses, technicians, aides, etc.—who have been downsized as a result of the feeding frenzy of the hospitals to consolidate. Those same hospital administrators who were part of the problem now want to save their skins (jobs) at the expense of others.

What will happen when 30 million Americans who have no health insurance enter the system?

Philip Mandel
New York City

To the Editor:

The term "managed care" has been used to characterize a wide range of health-care plans. According to John K. Iglehart, editor of *Health Affairs*, managed care refers to a variety of methods of financing and organizing the delivery of comprehensive health care in which an attempt is made to control costs by controlling the provision of services.

Despite the variety of managed-care plans, most include the following cost-control features: (1) provider networks, with explicit criteria for selection; (2) alternative payments and rates that often shift some financial risk to providers; and (3) utilization controls over hospital and specialist physician services. Yet however defined, managed care as it is currently practiced in the U.S., with its focus on profits, could well destroy a health-care system that, in the words of Dr. Barron, is "widely acknowledged to be the most innovative and most technically sophisticated . . . in the world."

Moreover, managed care can never resolve the cost dilemma because it does not address the special demographic factors which have been driving medical costs in this country ever higher. These factors include an enormous poverty population and an increase in social pathology and high-risk behavior. Compared with most other developed countries, America has more drug-abuse-related illnesses, more AIDS, more pelvic-inflammatory disease, more teenage, unwanted, out-of-wedlock pregnancies resulting in more premature and sick babies, more homicides and assaultive injuries, and more accidents, especially among the young. All require intensive and expensive treatment. These behaviors, which are linked to such social pathologies as the breakdown of the family, chronic unemployment, homelessness, violence, and despair, cause Americans to end up in overwhelming numbers in the emergency rooms, intensive-care units, and morgues of our hospitals.

That is not all. Health costs are further increased by the tendency of Americans to "medicalize" many of these social problems: this occurs when a condition formerly considered deviant is redefined as an illness, treated through the

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health-care system, and paid for with health-care dollars.

The United States is paying dearly for its social and behavioral problems.

LEROY L. SCHWARTZ, M.D.
President, Health Policy International
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, Bruce A. Barron tells us that

> In many managed-care programs, the amount of time for patient-physician contact has been significantly curtailed and the level of clinical training required for a given task has been redefined downward. Patient care is provided by . . . psychologists instead of psychiatrists.

To call getting care from a psychologist instead of a psychiatrist redefining clinical training downward is plain nonsense. A small point, perhaps, but not to a child psychologist with 21 years of clinical experience.

To treat patients with mental illness we need *all* the qualified, experienced professionals we can get: psychologists and social workers as well as psychiatrists. It is in fact very difficult to find psychiatrists who are trained to do psychotherapy and psychological assessment, which is not the case with psychologists. Some managed-care mental-health plans prefer cheap labor, which often means inexperienced professionals, whatever their title, who are hungry for patients.

As Dr. Barron acknowledges, the horror of managed care is that "it is not a mechanism for managing care at all; it is a mechanism for managing costs." Just good old-fashioned ruthless rationing—keeping costs low and quality down—mixed with plenty of political doublespeak. Wasting time, not to mention risking life and limb, and saving money. What a bargain! We are resurrecting Soviet-style health care in America.

STEVEN J. CERESNIE
Plymouth, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

In recent years, there has been an unparalleled assault upon the medical structure of the United States, which has been impelled by the desire to transfer control to government and to HMO's as well as to other bureaucrats. This assault is occurring despite the fact that the medical and allied professions in the United States offer the best care in the world. In fact, severely deficient medical care occurs precisely in government institutions like the Veterans Administration hospitals.

Throughout my professional life, I have been concerned with achieving good medical care and preserving the integrity of physicians and their co-practitioners, nurses and allied health personnel. I believe the basic ingredient in excellent medical care is a strong emotional and functional relationship between a skilled, compassionate doctor and a patient, with technology only secondarily a factor.

One of the attacks on this basic ingredient of good medicine has been delivered by HMO's, which are more accurately called health corporations. These corporations exist to break the bonds between doctor and patient, acquire the money involved, and pass the money on to their stockholders. Medical care is only an instrument to accomplish this process.

The American Medical Association (AMA) has emerged as a strong advocate for the patient, the physician, and good medical care. Among the elements in the AMA's reform program are medical savings accounts, which involve the awarding of tax credits and vouchers to individuals to buy high-deductible and low-premium insurance, owned by the patient, not job-related. The basic goal of medical savings accounts is to advance the patient's free choice in a market environment. Basically, however, a revision of the tax laws is necessary to return

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free choice to the patient and doctor.

Physician health-care corporations designed to deliver medical care through the group action of physician-members have been established in several states. I am one of the early members of the Pennsylvania Health Care Corporation, which is now functioning in southern Pennsylvania.

Increasingly, the deficiencies of HMO's are becoming evident to the American people.

PAUL S. FRIEDMAN, M.D.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

In "The Price of Managed Care," Bruce A. Barron notes that solutions to the declining quality of and increasing limitations on most private health care "would involve . . . the fundamental reconceiving of medical insurance."

One solution I have been advocating for years is to return to individuals the direct cost and provider-selection responsibilities of routine medical care by eliminating health-care insurance as an employee benefit and making "disaster" insurance universally available for financially ruinous medical bills.

The first step (having individuals pay for their own care) could be easily accomplished by simultaneously abolishing the income-tax deduction for premiums paid by corporations and allowing a deduction for a portion of the health-care costs paid by individuals.

Returning to citizens the obligation to select their care and allowing individuals the right to experience the direct costs of their choices would exert beneficial pressure on both the quality and costs of care.

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The second step (universal calamity insurance) could operate the way flood insurance operates today, i.e., the government would require private insurance companies to offer it to individuals. Additionally, in the case of extreme health-care costs, the government itself could provide back-up for the less financially fortunate. It is the untypical, "monster" bills, for example, that most of us fear, for a heart attack, cancer, or a needed transplant. These individually rare events should not control the direction of society's overall policy toward health insurance.

LAWRENCE E. HONIG
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR:

I was delighted to read Bruce A. Barron's critique of managed care. It is astonishing that Americans, who are so obsessed with risk avoidance, are being herded into plans which leave major health decisions to bureaucrats whose only objective is cutting costs.

Insurers have curtailed the choice of doctors and access to diagnostic procedures by creating exclusive networks of participating physicians. Furthermore, referrals for procedures or tests must be made within the networks by participating doctors, and the use of non-network doctors is discouraged. In this way the insurers can control fees as well as referrals.

Cost control is achieved through the enforcement of a system of "capitation," by which a set fee is given to the primary-care doctor, regardless of whether a person has a chronic illness requiring frequent visits or is healthy and needs only an occasional check-up. Such a system results in severe rationing of medical care.

There are still a few steps available to the public to abort these trends. First, legislators should be persuaded to adopt "any-willing-provider" laws, already mandated in several states. These forbid insurers to exclude accredited physicians from their networks. They also permit charges to be negotiated between doctors and patients rather than being set by insurers. Second, legislators should take a serious look at medical savings accounts as well as tax deductions for medical care. Finally, there is a need for means testing in Medicare programs, and a willingness by all participants to accept higher deductibles coupled with insurance for catastrophic illnesses.

RUTH S. KING
New York City

BRUCE A. BARRON writes:

I gather that Philip Mandel thinks physicians should accept at least some of the responsibility for what has happened to the medical-care system in this country. Except for what I believe were relatively infrequent abuses of the system, what came to pass was, in my view, a result of the complicity of the organized power structure in medicine. To make it absolutely clear, by this I mean not only the AMA and state medical societies but also academic medicine, including medical schools and teaching hospitals.

The self-inflicted wounds outlined in Leroy L. Schwartz's letter—which have been incurred as a result of behaviors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, unsafe sexual practices, and the like—raise issues we have just begun to address. Clearly, the current discussion of what to do about the tobacco industry marks a milestone in this area. If medical care is going to be a zero-sum game, should we take dollars from a patient who has had the misfortune to get diabetes or multiple myeloma and spend those rationed funds on someone who ignored the Surgeon General's warning and developed emphysema as a direct result of having smoked a pack of cigarettes a day for twenty years? The money currently spent on patients with diseases caused by voluntary acts amounts to a very significant portion of our $900-billion a year medical-care expense.

With due respect to Steven J. Ceresnie, the training of a psychologist involves less in terms of time and dollars than that required for certification by the American Board of Psychiatry. The role of psychologists is not in question; the substitution of a psychologist or, for that matter, a psychiatric social worker, for a psychiatrist is. For the record, the ability to prescribe medication for patients with psychiatric problems is limited to psychiatrists.

Paul S. Friedman, Lawrence E. Honig, and Ruth S. King are all properly concerned about where we are going. It is to be hoped that as the pendulum swings, those who wish to control their own medical care will be given the opportunity to do so. Medical savings accounts are just one of the strategies for reaching this goal.

"For the Love of Country"

TO THE EDITOR:

I recently moved to Denver, the city where Timothy McVeigh was just convicted of his appalling crimes. For that reason, as well as many others, I was grateful for Gertrude Himmelfarb's essay on patriotism, "For the Love of Country" [May], not just for its warning that the extremism of Left and Right feed off each other, but, more generally, because of its reminder that statecraft can be a noble calling: if our virtues are merely domestic and local, we rob ourselves of one of humanity's chief avenues for transcendence in the selfless devotion to a cause greater than ourselves.

I was troubled, however, by her repeated use of the word "could," as in "a sensible tax policy *could* encourage two-parent families," or "divorce laws *could* be devised to deter the break-up of the family," or "the courts *could* support . . . the rights of communities to enforce anti-pornography, anti-obscenity, or anti-abortion ordinances." It might seem like a caviling pettifoggery to wonder why the relevant word here isn't "should" instead of Miss Himmelfarb's seemingly insouciant, quasi-optative "could," but my point is a wider one. In my opinion, the single piece missing in her analysis is the role of the courts in her writ of attainder against the bureaucratic bullying she so rightly laments.

A judicial power grab entails something rather more ominous than government by bureaucratic fiat, which can be, at least theoretically, corrected through our

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constitutionally protected right of "petition for a redress of grievances." But if the judiciary has ambitions to usurp the role of legislatures, the only avenue open to it is to read fundamental law into positive law. It is precisely that move which short-circuits democracy, for it is the whole purpose of fundamental law to be universal and therefore nonnegotiable. In other words, one can hardly aspire to the wider virtues of statecraft if the tools of that craft have been taken from us by a know-it-all judiciary, one that even moderates are beginning to suspect has run amok.

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J.
Regis University
Denver, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR:

Gertrude Himmelfarb's essay presents the most concise and accurate understanding to date of the implications of the renewed call for the recovery of community in America. She is absolutely right on target that "Civil society . . . is a two-way street. It takes us back to our roots, to our nearest and dearest. But it should also take us forward to our nation and country."

There is one area, in my opinion, where her brilliant essay falls short, however: communities arise not from the top down but from the bottom up. Communities cannot be rationally planned; they arise spontaneously and cannot be mandated or created by an act of national will. Thus, efforts by the federal government, like the Clinton-Powell call for an army of volunteers, will not recreate communities but, rather, weaken what is left of them and replace them with a stronger and more invasive government, one that will, as Miss Himmelfarb says, assume "the domestic, nurturing tasks of parents and families."

The best course of action by the government is to *do no harm*. Perhaps doing nothing and allowing the natural formation of communities without the aid or sponsorship of the "nanny state" would be the wisest course of action for the future of our nation.

CLIFFORD A. BATES, JR.
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, Connecticut

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB writes:

"Could" or "should" (or, for that matter, why not "would"?)—I'm flattered that Father Oakes gave my article so close a reading. I think I could (there goes that "insouciant, quasi-optative" mode again) make out a case for each of those words—but I won't.

The judiciary, however, is a serious matter. In fact, I did refer to the courts in the sentence he partially quotes: "Or the courts could support (as they did for much of our history) the rights of communities to enforce anti-pornography, anti-obscenity, or anti-abortion ordinances." And in the following sentence as well: "Or, if the courts are recalcitrant, the legislature could act more vigorously to achieve these ends." I agree with Father Oakes that an imperious judiciary is a grave threat to democracy, and I addressed that issue earlier in COMMENTARY, in the February symposium, "On the Future of Conservatism." The subject of my present article, however, is the invasive bureaucracy of the welfare state, which is yet another threat to democracy.

I also agree with Clifford A. Bates, Jr. that "do no harm" is a wise principle of government, and that the government does harm by interfering with the natural development of communities. But this does not mean that the government should do nothing or that communities on their own can do everything. In our efforts to discredit and dismantle the "nanny state," we must be wary not to discredit and subvert the state as such. One of the unfortunate consequences of the current welfare state is that it tends to do just that—to illegitimize legitimate government.

NATO Expansion

TO THE EDITOR:

In his review of *The Dawn of Peace* in Europe by Michael Mandelbaum [Books in Review, May] Alvin H. Bernstein writes three pages on the advisability of NATO expansion eastward without mentioning the crucial issue: what impact will NATO expansion have on the interaction between Western democratic politics and Western military preparedness? When one analyzes the issue, one quickly realizes that NATO expansion is a policy all the advantages of which are merely apparent and all the disadvantages real.

We know already that five to fifteen years from now every NATO member, including the proposed expansion members, will confront the agonizing domestic political dilemma not of whether but of how much to cut domestic entitlements. The mood will be ugly. Faced with budget votes on which reelection will hinge, each legislature will present its choice publicly as between cutting a little fat from the military budget and cutting already emaciated entitlements to the bone. The real choice will be between cutting more fat from entitlements and amputating a limb from military preparedness.

In the NATO expansion states, the voters will be thinking: "We're NATO members now! Others much bigger than we concern themselves with our defense." In Germany, the voters will think: "We're no longer a front-line NATO state. Others shoulder that burden now." In America, younger voters will know only vaguely, if at all, what the Soviet Union really was, but they will know vividly what it costs to support their parents in sickness and retirement. Faced with these electoral mindsets, the unanimous Western legislative choice will be—amputate!

So after NATO expansion, Russia will possess greater influence over European security than before it. If things do not go well in Russia, European security will suffer. It will suffer even more if things do go well in Russia but its policy-makers decide that adroit intimidation of the West will make them go even better.

What the U.S. Senate should do is clear: say no to the West's currently most politically alluring and politically dangerous drug—NATO expansion. It will be a rejection all the disadvantages of which are merely

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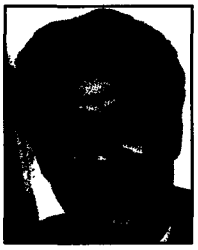

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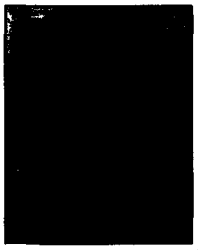

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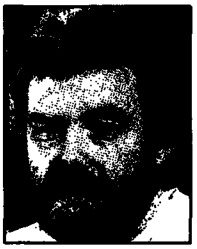

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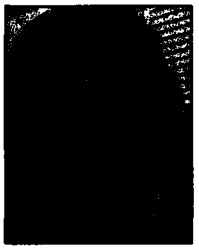

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apparent and the advantages real. Remember that if the Senate approves NATO expansion, the Clinton administration will immediately decrease military preparedness in Central Europe to prove that NATO expansion is not an anti-Russian move. So, go ahead, embarrass the Clinton administration by refusing to allow NATO to issue new membership cards. Public opinion will then constrain Congress and the administration to do for real what NATO expansion would have done only on paper: increase Central European military preparedness.

DOUGLAS HOFFMAN
Chicago, Illinois

ALVIN H. BERNSTEIN writes:

Let me say, first, that after having read Douglas Hoffman's letter carefully, I am still not sure exactly what point he is trying to make. Nevertheless, I have no quarrel with his prediction that in the future the defense ministries of all NATO members will have to compete with social entitlements for taxpayer dollars. Some of Mr. Hoffman's other points, however, are questionable.

Why does he assume that military preparedness is the way to ensure future stability in Central Europe, when in fact the key to stability is the consolidation of democracy in the former Warsaw Pact countries, which is what NATO expansion would accomplish?

Mr. Hoffman does not seem to understand that should Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic enter the Alliance in 1999 they will be expected to spend 3 percent of their GDP on defense, whereas by that year the United States, with all its global commitments, will be dipping below 3 percent.

The history of the 20th century surely makes it improbable that Germany will feel more secure and therefore spend less on defense because of a Polish buffer.

Finally, Mr. Hoffman does not register what one U.S. ambassador has called "the moral problem inherent in denying to the nations of Central Europe the opportunity to share in security arrangements" available to the West.

Demjanjuk

TO THE EDITOR:

"Demjanjuk: A Summing-Up" by Joshua Muravchik [April]—in fact, a prosecution brief—was fascinating and, of course, damning. I have written about this case myself and studied it, including the evidence the U.S. Justice Department failed to give Demjanjuk's lawyers, for which the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals held it had committed "fraud on the court."

It is quite correct to say that John (Ivan) Demjanjuk's absolute innocence has not been proved. No one knows for sure what happened a half-century ago. But that is not the point: the U.S. and British systems of justice, flawed as they may be, require that the guilt of a defendant for specific acts be proved—not by "persuasive" evidence but by evidence that is conclusive beyond any reasonable doubt.

Mr. Muravchik mentions eyewitness testimony identifying Demjanjuk as "Ivan the Terrible," but not the fact that one such witness, in the Israeli court, contradicted his own written statement made 40 years earlier. Eyewitness accounts are notoriously unreliable, even over a much shorter time span. Furthermore (also not mentioned, but highlighted in a BBC documentary on the case), the photographic line-up the Israelis showed the survivors who later identified Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible was presented in a way that pointed to Demjanjuk's picture and implied a foregone conclusion. And no defense test of the identity card issued to Demjanjuk at the Nazi training camp of Trawniki was allowed. All this, plus the Justice Department's sabotaging of the defense case, would be enough to have the indictment thrown out of any honest court—as indeed it eventually was.

In Scotland there is a form of verdict that would have been much more appropriate to the Demjanjuk affair. When the prosecution's case is not conclusive according to the standards of criminal prosecution—beyond a reasonable doubt—the indictment against the defendant may be judged simply "not proved." This is not an acquittal, but does not allow punishment, either.

Did Demjanjuk serve in the SS? Mr. Muravchik says that this is proved, and much of the evidence is on his side. But "assisted in unspeakable crimes, against humanity"? Sorry, the accusation is grotesque. What crimes, specifically, did this man commit? Criminal guilt is the individual's responsibility; proof of it must, absolutely and without any doubt, connect individual and act. That was not done in Demjanjuk's case, and not all the nudge-wink "persuasion" in the journalistic world can make up for it.

Maybe Demjanjuk is guilty of horrible things. But "maybe" and "horrible things" (or "unspeakable crimes") are not good enough for punishment, not in the American and British systems. Cheating by the authorities amounts, in fact, to a species of lynching. Among us even the probably guilty are not supposed to be lynched. The Israeli Supreme Court and the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals confirmed that. As for Mr. Muravchik's brief, I like to think we have gotten beyond the justification of lynching by the standard of "everybody knows." As for his appeal to Soviet justice—please!

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR:

Demjanjuk's defenders may exaggerate, but he was accused of having committed the specific crimes of Ivan the Terrible—and Ivan the Terrible he was not, at least not by the standards of proof generally accepted in the West.

Mr. Muravchik acknowledges that Demjanjuk's original accuser was a Ukrainian-American Soviet sympathizer. In fact, the accuser was an outcast in the Ukrainian-American community in which he lived and a suspected Soviet agent, not only because of his vehement pro-Soviet views but because he was permitted to travel freely between the United States and the Soviet Union when such travel was extremely difficult for the average cit-

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izen. Ordinarily, therefore, the list of "suspects" he brought back with him from the Soviet Union (on which Demjanjuk's name appeared) would have been consigned to the dustbin of Soviet disinformation.

When the U.S. Office of Strategic Investigation (OSI) was formed to aid the Israelis in their search for Nazi criminals, there was considerable opposition. This was due both to the unreliability of eyewitness testimony after so many years and to the suspicion that attached to circumstantial evidence, including documents and sworn depositions, eagerly provided by the Soviet Union. Among other things, such evidence was considered suspect because it was known that the USSR was eager to punish the many Soviet soldiers, including particularly those of Ukrainian nationality, who had joined anti-Soviet units during World War II, not because they were pro-Nazi but because they despised Communism.

The Soviet-provided ID card alluded to by Mr. Muravchik played a prominent role in Demjanjuk's Israeli trial. It showed a man with the collar of a Red Army soldier, the staple marks indicating it came from another source. The SS stamp on the card was in Roman, not Germanic, script and it was signed by an SS commandant who had been transferred before the card was issued. An American forgery expert wanted to testify for the defense but was denied a visa by Israel. Of course, anomalies may have a perfectly logical explanation, but under Western concepts of law, discrepancies are normally settled in favor of the defense.

If we are ready for Round 2 against Demjanjuk, by all means let us proceed, but this time with more regard for Western legal protocol.

GLORIA STEWART
Thousand Oaks, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Joshua Muravchik's article is the correct response to the claim of Demjanjuk's Israeli defense attorney, Yoram Sheftel, that Demjanjuk was an innocent victim of a show trial. Mr. Muravchik marshals compelling evidence from the testimony of Ignats Danilchenko, a guard at Sobibor who admitted participating in the murder of Jews there and who identified Demjanjuk as also having been at Sobibor. But, as Mr. Muravchik observes, Danilchenko's testimony still leaves open the question of whether Demjanjuk was Ivan the Terrible.

I would like here to offer a minor corrective to Mr. Muravchik's treatment of the way in which the Israeli investigation proceeded that will support the conclusion that Demjanjuk was not Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka, but was, in the words of historian Gitta Sereny, "Ivan the Less Terrible of Sobibor."

Mr. Muravchik writes that when the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) turned the case over to the Israelis, nine names were sent to the Israeli police, accompanied by "photographs taken from immigration files, as well as photos of other Ukrainians to serve as 'filler.'" Photographs of both Demjanjuk and Feodor Fedorenko, who was accused of having been a guard at Treblinka, were included in this group. But, as Mr. Muravchik recounts, when they were shown the photographs, several Treblinka survivors pointed not to Fedorenko but to Demjanjuk, calling him Ivan the Terrible.

This account is lacking in several small but potentially important details. Seventeen loose photos of Ukrainian suspects, none of whom was free of suspicion, had been sent to Israel. There were no "fillers." In 1988, I saw a copy of the composite of the photographs the Israel police had shown to the survivors. The only person whose face was on a white background was Demjanjuk. The faces of all the others were on dark backgrounds. While it is certainly true that I noticed Demjanjuk because I

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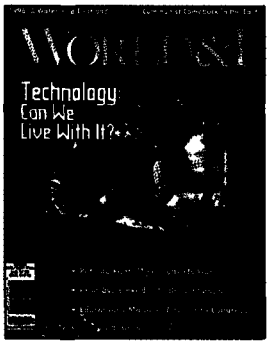

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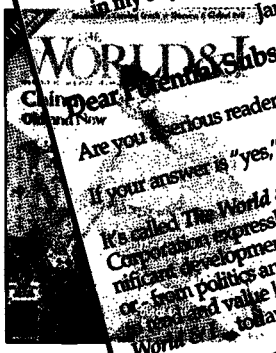

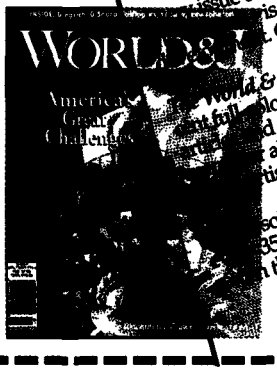

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recognized his picture from the Cleveland newspapers (where he had lived), it is also possible that this difference alone might have also caught the eye of some of the survivors.

Furthermore, Miriam Radiwker, the Israeli investigator, did not simply call survivors. She took out ads in Israeli papers stating that the police were conducting an investigation

> against the *Ukrainians Ivan* Demjanjuk and Feodor Fedorenko. Survivors of the Death Camps at Sobibor and *Treblinka* are requested to report to Israel Police Headquarters. [Emphasis added.]

It is possible that the words Radiwker used—Ukrainians, Ivan, Treblinka—predisposed the survivors to seek out Ivan the Terrible. But Radiwker never asked any of the witnesses if they had picked up the idea that Demjanjuk was Ivan the Terrible from the ads.

In addition, according to reports I have read, the initial interviews with the Treblinka survivors were carried out slightly differently from the way Mr. Muravchik describes them. The first witness Radiwker interviewed, Eugen Turowsky, who had been a mechanic in Treblinka's machine shop, identified both men. But in that initial interview he did not identify Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible. He did so when he returned the next day, even though he also admitted that he had never actually seen Ivan in the area in which he worked.

The second witness, who had been recommended by Turowsky, was interviewed a few hours after Turowsky left on the first day. He positively identified Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible. Two days later, the third witness, who had also been recommended by Turowsky, affirmed the identification of Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible, even though he thought Ivan had been killed during a prisoner rebellion at the death camp.

There is one other piece of information, which Mr. Muravchik could not possibly know and which I offer only as a small piece of corroboration of the suspicions aroused by the interviewing procedure. Immediately after Demjanjuk was found guilty by an Israeli court in 1988, I had a conversation with an Israeli friend of mine. He had attended a number of sessions of the trial in Jerusalem, and he told me the following story. At one session he spoke with a survivor who was sitting next to him. This person, who had been at Treblinka, said that Demjanjuk was not Ivan the Terrible. "Why don't you offer to testify to that?" my friend asked. "Because the other survivors may kill me," was the reply.

Whether or not the survivor's concern was justified, the certitude of his statement, combined with what Radiwker had revealed about her interviewing procedure, does seem to support the claim that there is reasonable doubt about Demjanjuk's identity as Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka.

MARTIN J. PLAX
Cleveland, Ohio

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

Herb Greer claims to have "studied" the Demjanjuk case. If so, it is shameful of him to claim that no defense test of Demjanjuk's identity card was allowed. The defense brought to Israel no fewer than five British and American witnesses who testified as document experts in an effort to discredit the card. To prepare for the trial, they were given not only the document itself but also the use of a police laboratory in which to conduct examinations of the paper and ink. On top of this, as recounted by Demjanjuk's Israeli attorney, Yoram Sheftel:

> Dr. [Julius] Grant [the chief defense expert] completed his examinations [in Israel], but emphasized that he had much more work to do in his English laboratory and that with the aid of his notes and the high-quality enlarged photocopies he had been given, he could continue his

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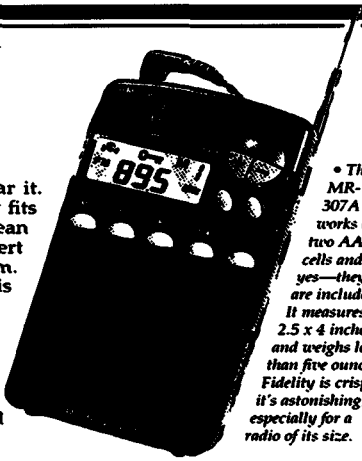

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work without needing the originals.

Mr. Greer also claims that "the photographic lineup . . . was presented in a way that pointed to Demjanjuk's picture and implied a foregone conclusion." Far from it. The original Treblinka survivors who identified Demjanjuk as Ivan the Terrible were interviewed in the hope that they could identify the guard Feodor Fedorenko (who later confessed), whereas Demjanjuk was believed to have been at Sobibor. The Israeli police investigator testified about the first such interview, with the survivor Eugen Turowsky:

> I invited him for Fedorenko, so I thought—and suddenly, when the cardboards [photos] were on the table, Turowsky began to really shout, "Ivan, Ivan from Treblinka, Ivan Grozny [i.e., "the terrible"]. I was shocked . . . because I knew he [Demjanjuk] was at Sobibor, as far as American intelligence was concerned, and American intelligence was always correct.

Mr. Greer further observes that I neglected to mention that one of the witnesses contradicted his own earlier account. In fact, there was not much to mention. That witness, Eliyahu Rosenberg, reported in 1945 and 1947 that Ivan the Terrible had been killed in the uprising of the few Jews who served as slaves in the operation of the killing facility at Treblinka and in which he had participated. At the Demjanjuk trial he explained that the version he had given back then was based on apparently wishful accounts he had heard from his compatriots as they fled. But he was sure now, he testified, that Demjanjuk was Ivan. The court considered at great length both Rosenberg's testimony and the strenuous efforts by the defense to discredit him. It concluded: "[T]he identification by [Eliyahu] Rosenberg of the defendant as Ivan reaches a high level of certainty. It is not sufficient, however, to be relied upon, by itself, without some support." And support there was from numerous other witnesses.

But it is on the subject of Sobibor that Mr. Greer goes from merely uninformed to downright unpleasant. The evidence that Demjanjuk was a *Wachmann* (guard) based at Trawniki, the headquarters for death-camp guards, and that he served at Sobibor is quite persuasive; it is based on multiple documentary records as well as on the affidavits of a fellow guard, Ignats Danilchenko. Mr. Greer does not dispute this but demands proof of specific criminal acts and says that my accusation that Demjanjuk "assisted in unspeakable crimes" is grotesque. He is wrong both morally and legally. Sobibor was not a concentration camp but an extermination camp. There, in the course of about two years, 250,000 Jews were murdered. These murders were carried out under the direction of some 20 to 30 German supervisors by a staff of about 150 *Wachmänner* who rounded up Jews from nearby ghettos, guarded the cattle cars that shipped them to the camp, and herded them into the gas chambers. Various testimony confirms that all the guards participated in this process of extermination. Specifically, Danilchenko said:

> *Wachmann* Demjanjuk took part in the mass extermination of Jewish citizens at the Sobibor camp. He guarded them to prevent their escaping prior to extermination, and accompanied them under guard to the gas chambers.

What does Mr. Greer want—a list of the names of the victims? Would that I could satisfy him. Even the law, much less moral judgment, does not require the kind of specificity Mr. Greer demands. Every party to a criminal conspiracy is liable for the acts of that conspiracy.

At the 1946 trial of the staff of the concentration camp at Mauthausen (a mild institution compared with Sobibor), the U.S. military tribunal at Dachau found that

> the circumstances, conditions, and the very nature of concentration camp Mauthausen . . . was of such a nature as to cause every official, governmental, military, and civil, and every employee thereof, whether he be a member of the Waffen SS, Allgemeine SS, a guard, or civilian, to be culpably and criminally responsible.

Now, to turn to Gloria Stewart: everything she says, important and unimportant, is erroneous, except for the assertion that the man who compiled the original list of alleged war criminals which included Demjanjuk was a Soviet sympathizer. U.S. government law-enforcement agencies (initially, in Demjanjuk's case, the Immigration and Naturalization Service) do not merely consign allegations to dustbins; they look for plausibility, which in this instance they found. The OSI, which took over the case, is the Office of Special Investigations (not "Strategic Investigation"). It was not formed to aid the Israelis but as a purely domestic initiative following passage of the 1978 "Holtzman amendment" disallowing U.S. residency for Nazi collaborators, and it did not elicit considerable opposition (the legislation passed both houses of Congress by overwhelming voice vote).

Although after the war the USSR persecuted and killed those of its citizens who had joined anti-Soviet World War II units, there is no record of its manufacturing evidence of war crimes committed by naturalized Americans. Of the hundreds or perhaps thousands of veterans of such units who made their way to the U.S. after the war, why would the Soviets single out a few anonymous, apolitical ones like Demjanjuk and Fedorenko for false accusations?

Her comments on the identity card are equally fanciful. The man in the photo was wearing not a Red Army uniform but a *Wachmann* uniform. Various features of the card were adjudicated at great length in the trial, but its historical accuracy, including such things as the identity of the German officials who signed it and the design of the stamps, was attested to by expert witnesses and acknowledged by the defense. Hence, Gloria Stewart's particulars are poppycock, as is her claim that an American defense expert was denied a visa. Will she name him?

Martin J. Plax is right on one point, although it is of

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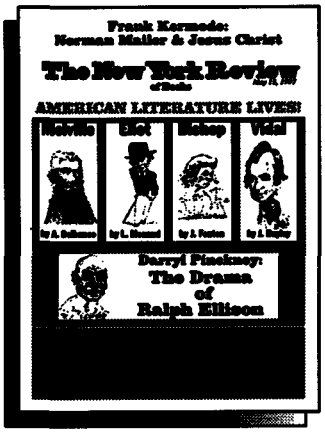

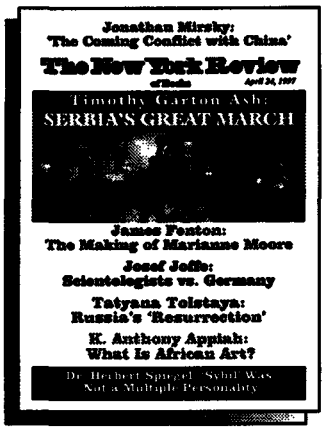

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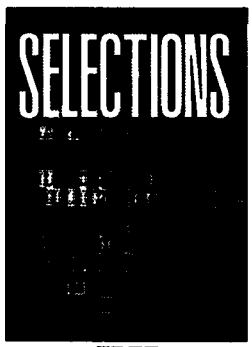

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little importance. I spoke loosely in calling the pictures of the other Ukrainians in the photo spread that included Demjanjuk and Fedorenko "filler." These other men were being investigated in the United States. But since the crimes of which they were accused had been committed within the Soviet Union rather than in Poland, it was doubtful that any witnesses to their crimes had reached Israel. Hence, from the viewpoint of Israeli investigators, the inclusion of these others mainly served the purpose of creating a photo spread.

Even if Demanjuk's photo were the only one on a white background, I do not see how this could have led one survivor after another to seize on it as Ivan. Moreover, I strongly doubt that this was the case. I have not seen the original spread (and apparently Mr. Plax has not, either), but Demjanjuk's attorney, Yoram Sheftel, includes one page of it in his book and almost all the photos appear on a white background.

Mr. Plax's conjecture about how the ad taken out by Israeli investigators might have misled the witnesses by conflating Demjanjuk, Fedorenko, Treblinka, and Sobibor is imaginative, but according to the court record, the facts are diametrically the opposite of his version. Far from mixing everything together, the ad, as recounted in the verdict,

> notif[ied] the public of the investigation being conducted against Nazi war criminals presently residing in the United States, among them Ivan Demjanjuk—who was active in the Sobibor camp—and Fedorenko Theodor [*sic*] who was active in Lublin and in the Treblinka camp.

Mr. Plax again is just plain wrong in saying that Turowsky did not identify Demjanjuk in the initial interview. I have already quoted above the testimony of the investigator describing that first interview. Turowsky identified him at once and emphatically. It is true that the investigator asked Turowsky to return the next day to pursue the matter but only because she was so unprepared for his initial response. And contrary to Mr. Plax's suggestion that Turowsky admitted that he had never actually seen Ivan, Turowsky said to the investigator: "I remember this Ukrainian well. I knew him personally because he would sometimes come to the workshop to repair something."

Mr. Plax is apparently also wrong in saying that the other witnesses had been recommended by Turowsky, although even if they had been it is hard to see what would have been wrong with this. According to the verdict:

> Mrs. Radiwker [the investigator] did not confine herself to the above-mentioned advertisement . . . but also invited people to her office who, as she knew from other investigations, had been in the Treblinka camp. It was actually in this way . . . that contact was established . . . and the statements [of the first three witnesses] were taken.

In his last point, Mr. Plax offers as "corroboration" the assertion that a friend told him that someone he encountered told him that Demjanjuk was not Ivan. Of what probative value is this?

As I think I have shown by now, these three letters offer a good illustration of the travesties that continue to be perpetrated by Demjanjuk's defenders and repeated even by casual observers of the case.

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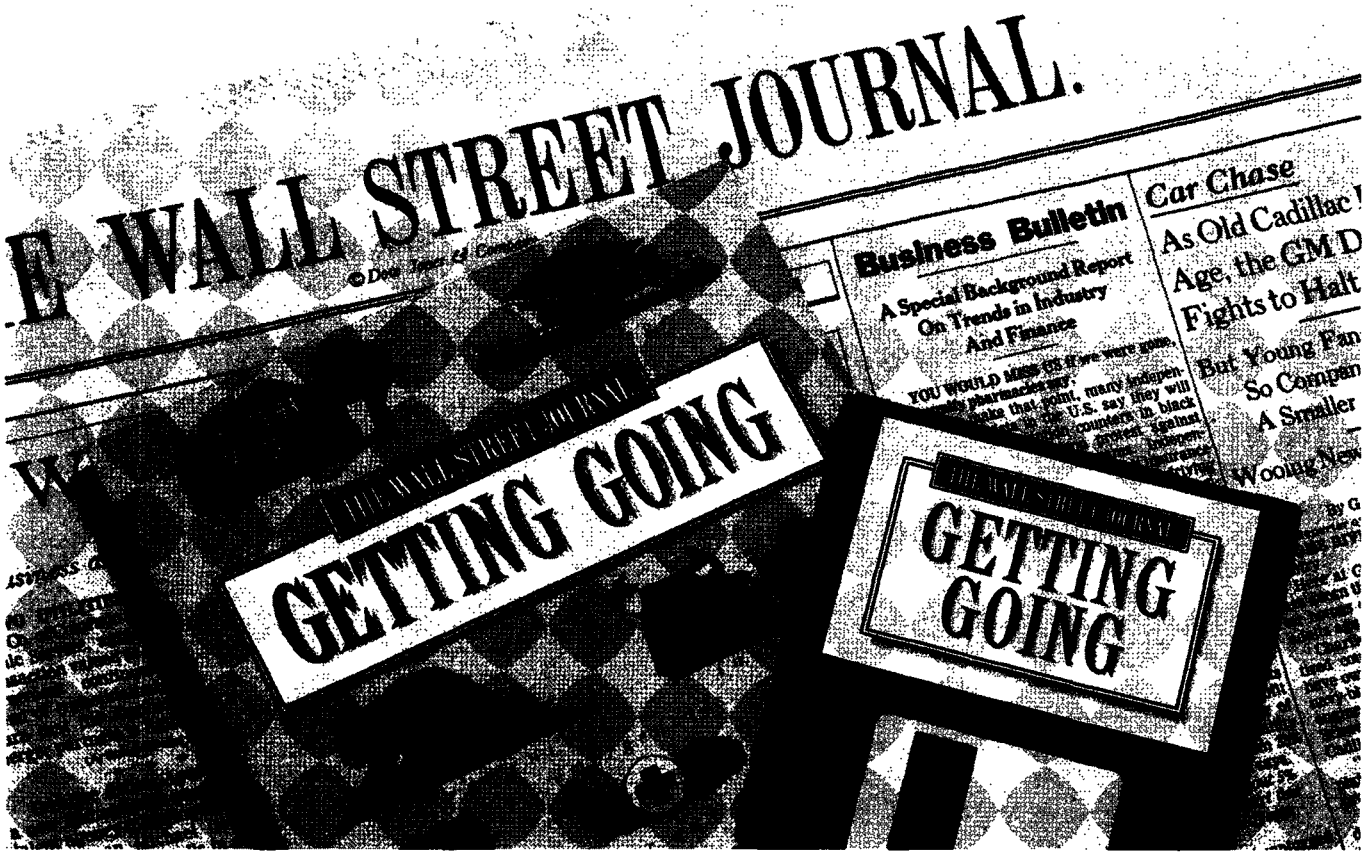

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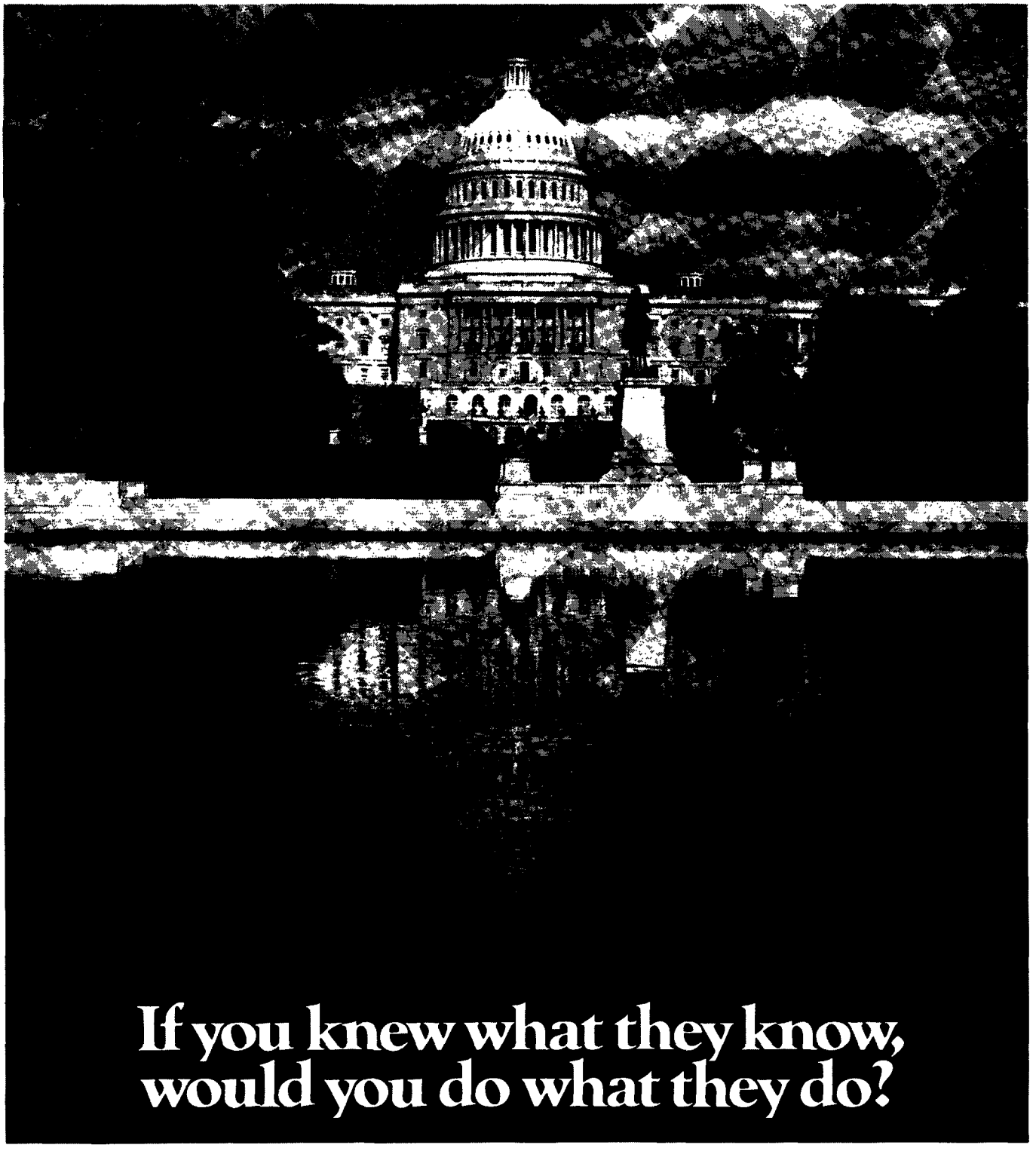

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Commentary
August 1997

Democracies and Double Standards

Robert Kagan

FOR CITIZENS of the world's most powerful democracy, it ought to be a source of satisfaction, and even of pride, that peoples all over the planet have struggled to adopt our model of government—and, in recent years, have succeeded in doing so at an astonishingly high rate. In the wave of democratization that swept the world between the late 1970's and early 1990's, more than 30 nations of widely diverse cultures and locales became democratic. Many of these transformations would once have been unimaginable: democracy in Taiwan? in Nicaragua? in Romania? in South Africa? Although some have since faltered and slipped back toward dictatorship, in most democracy has sunk its roots deeply and appears to be settling in for a long stay.

The United States played a central part—indeed, an indispensable part—in spurring and supporting this global transition. To be sure, in Latin America and Asia, growing economies and indigenous political forces made dictatorship more precarious. Within the Soviet empire, stagnation and decay hollowed out Communist tyranny from within. But in the absence of American exhortation, pressure, and in some cases direct intervention, these broad historical trends could easily have been cut short by guerrilla victories, military coups, or violent repression. Instead, they were seized upon by local leader after local leader, from Corazon Aquino and José Napoleon Duarte to Lech Walesa and Boris Yeltsin, each of whom was favored with American support at the crucial turning point.

Can anyone doubt that the spread of democracy these past twenty years has been a good thing, both for the United States and for the world? To contemplate today's situation is to appreciate anew the wisdom of American policy-makers in the late 70's and throughout most of the 1980's who placed a special value on promoting democratic governance abroad as part of America's grand strategy. Indeed, given the remarkable success of this policy, one would have every reason to expect that it continues to command a great deal of support in the foreign-policy establishment and among American public officials.

But one would be wrong.

II

OVER THE past four or five years, a new pessimism, a new indifference, and even a new distaste for the promotion of democracy abroad have rippled through intellectual circles and out into the political arena. The assault comes from many different directions: from both the Right and the Left, from isolationists and internationalists, from the avatars of realism and the apostles of free-

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trade liberalism. But for all its diversity, the trend is unmistakable. The policies that helped shape the present, democratic era are losing legitimacy.

As one rather remarkable illustration, consider two "data points." In 1991, the distinguished Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington published a book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, which exhaustively chronicled and unapologetically celebrated the advance of democracy around the world from the late 1970's onward. Although Huntington recognized some significant obstacles to the further extension of this trend—not least, the limits on political pluralism and individual rights that might be imposed by certain cultures, especially the Islamic and the Confucian—he reminded his readers that similar arguments had once been made about the inhibiting effects of Catholicism, and had been proved wrong in Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Latin America. Cultures need not be "permanent obstacles to development in one direction or another," he wrote. "Cultures evolve."

Thanks to broad, impersonal forces like economic growth, "time," Huntington concluded in 1991, was "on democracy's side." Still, though economic development and modernization helped make democracy possible, only "political leadership makes it real." Democracy would continue to spread only "to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and in individual countries want it to spread." Urging the United States to take a leading role in the process, Huntington departed from the analytic mode of the social scientist to propose, at several points in his book, "Guidelines for Democratizers."

Now for our second data point. It could not have been very long before the Huntington who wrote ringingly in 1991 that "I believe . . . democracy is good in itself and . . . has positive consequences for individual freedom, domestic stability, international peace, and the United States of America" began revising his optimism downward. By 1994, he had published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, "The Clash of Civilizations," in which he outlined the view—later developed in a book of the same title—that culture, or civilization, pretty much determined politics after all. As he would put it in another article in *Foreign Affairs* two years later, such hallmarks of democracy as the separation of spiritual and temporal authority, pluralism, the rule of law, representative government, and respect for individual rights and liberties were a product of European civilization, and "the belief that non-Western peoples should adopt Western values, institutions, and culture is, if taken seriously, immoral in its implications." The message now was that the United States and the West should stay out of the affairs of other civilizations and tend to their own—which happened, by the way, to be in a perilous state of decline.

HUNTINGTON'S MAY be the starkest but is far from the only example of the swift journey traveled by many foreign-policy thinkers from optimism to skepticism, and from participation, however qualified, in the euphoria occasioned by the spread of democracy and the downfall of Soviet Communism to denunciation of that euphoria. One can discern the origins of the new dourness in the virtually uniform response among intellectuals to Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article, "The End of History." In that now-famous work, Fukuyama suggested that the collapse of Communism augured nothing less than "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Although Fukuyama conspicuously did *not* say this spelled an end to all human troubles, he was taken as saying it, and the reaction was fierce. It was not enough to prove that Fukuyama had exaggerated the good news; it was necessary to declare that he was entirely wrong, and that the news was in fact bad.

The harbingers of bad news have multiplied in the intervening years. We have been told that the world, far from being in somewhat greater harmony as a result of the spread of democratic government, is really *Out of Control* (the title of a 1993 book by Zbigniew Brzezinski) or in a state of *Pandaemonium* (the title of a book by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in the same year). The Yale historian Paul Kennedy, undeterred by history's refutation of his 1988 work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (in which he had warned of the impending bankruptcy of the United States under the weight of "imperial overstretch"), produced, in *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (1993), a new catalogue of global horrors: population explosions, disease, growing disparities of wealth, environmental catastrophe, the breakdown of nation-states. In "The Coming Anarchy," an influential article in the *Atlantic Monthly* later fleshed out in the portentously titled book, *The Ends of the Earth*, Robert D. Kaplan gave "personal meaning" to Kennedy's tale of miseries by providing a worldwide tour of the future now awaiting us: "Poverty, the collapse of cities, porous borders, cultural and racial strife, growing economic disparities, [and] weakening nation-states."

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Although Huntington himself has not fully endorsed the new "chaos paradigm," the picture he has painted in the last few years suggests the futility of any efforts at amelioration. In a world in which, as he wrote last year, "the word 'genocide' has been heard far more often . . . than it was in any half-decade during the cold war," talk of supporting the further spread of democracy seems not only silly but misguided. In a *New York Times* op-ed piece, Robert Kaplan has suggested that we "shift our emphasis in the third world from holding elections to promoting family planning, environmental renewal, road building, and other stabilizing projects." What many third-world countries now need, in Kaplan's view, is not democracy, which tends rather to weaken than to strengthen society, but a dictatorship that can lead them through the stages of economic development necessary before democratic government becomes thinkable.

Kaplan is not alone in proposing that democracy may not only be too difficult for some people to achieve but actually bad for them. Two political scientists from Columbia University, Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, have discovered a hitherto unknown "historical pattern" linking "democratization, belligerent nationalism, and war." Reinterpreting the origins of the Crimean war, World War I, and such modern conflicts as the wars between Serbia and Croatia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan; and citing the fact that "the electorate of Russia's partial democracy cast nearly a quarter of its votes [in 1993] for the party of radical nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky," Mansfield and Snyder have concluded, with mathematical precision, that

> states that make the biggest leap, from total autocracy to extensive mass democracy—like contemporary Russia—are about twice as likely to fight wars in the decade after democratization as are states that remain autocracies.

Indeed, the splitting-up of the Soviet behemoth into fifteen new states has provided ample fodder for the new debunkers of democracy. In seven of those states democracy is intact though precarious, while in the remaining eight it is either increasingly flawed or absent. But these eight make up fully half of a worldwide list compiled by Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment as proof positive of a "retrenchment" that "is stripping away the illusions that have surrounded the pro-democratic enterprise of recent years." Similarly with the break-up of Yugoslavia, where, according to Mansfield and Snyder, the "inexorable pressure for democratization" is what allowed the old elites to create "a new basis for legitimacy through nationalist propaganda and military action." After all, Fareed Zakaria, the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs*, pointed out in early 1996, it was through the quintessentially democratic procedure of elections that a "xenophobic dictator," Slobodan Milosevic, could consolidate his power in Serbia.

To the list of bad things produced by democracy has been added, finally, the deeply problematic outcome of elections in the Islamic world. In Algeria in 1992, such elections seemed certain to yield a victory by Muslim radicals, and were therefore canceled by the military. In Turkey, elections in 1995 produced a victory for the Welfare party, whose leader, Necmettin Erbakan, upon taking power in 1996, set about encouraging Islamic fundamentalism at home and courting the radical governments of Iran, Iraq, and Libya abroad; he was forced from his perch this year by the secular Turkish military. In both cases, it took a violation of democratic process to put a halt to what the democratic process had alarmingly yielded, and in both cases many observers and government officials heaved a sigh of relief: surely, they reasoned, it is better to have in place an orderly authoritarian government we can work with than a radical one we cannot.

III

IRONICALLY, THAT is the kind of reasoning that Jeane J. Kirkpatrick pursued many years ago in these pages in "Dictatorships and Double Standards,"* the seminal and wide-ranging article which led to her appointment as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and influential adviser on foreign policy to the newly elected Ronald Reagan.

Kirkpatrick came at the issue from within the context of that historical moment. Specifically, her article was aimed at the blunderings of the Carter administration in foreign affairs over the preceding three years, and the "double standard" referred to in her title was this: the administration, and its liberal supporters, had reacted with punitive outrage to violations of human rights perpetrated by right-wing regimes allied to the United States, while taking a relatively accommodating view of the far more systematic abuses of Communist tyrannies that were actively threatening American interests around the world. Worse, by hectoring our allies and pressuring them to democratize overnight, the Carter administration, she argued, had transformed

* November 1979.

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two such allies, Iran and Nicaragua, into hostile, radical dictatorships.

But much of Kirkpatrick's essay also transcended the particular issues of the day and was meant to enunciate durable political truths, however hard she thought they might be for some Americans to swallow. One of these was that dictatorships, like the poor, would always be with us. At a time when the number of democracies outside Western Europe, the United States, and Canada could be counted on one hand, Kirkpatrick declared, quite accurately, that "most governments in the world are, as they always have been, autocracies of one kind or another." And yet, she went on, "no idea holds greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances."

This idea, in Kirkpatrick's judgment, was simply false. In "Dictatorships and Double Standards" she took sharp issue with the notion of modernization's inevitability (an idea associated with the work of Samuel P. Huntington), and went out of her way to slam Zbigniew Brzezinski, the main foreign-policy intellectual in the Carter administration, for his insistence on viewing the world not from the "perspective of American interests or intentions" but from that of "the modernizing nation and the 'end' of history." Although Kirkpatrick did not deny that U.S. policy could "encourage [the] process of liberalization and democratization" in some autocratic regimes, she came close to doing so. The attempt should certainly not be made, she wrote, "at a time when the incumbent government is fighting for its life against violent adversaries." Moreover, the proposed reforms would have to be "aimed at producing gradual change rather than perfect democracy overnight." And "gradual" did not mean a few years. "Decades, if not centuries" might be "required for people to acquire the necessary disciplines and habits."

IV

EIGHTEEN YEARS and more than 30 new democracies later, Kirkpatrick's intellectual followers include, amazingly enough, some of the main targets of her criticisms in 1979—and on both the Left and the Right. On the Left, especially in the giddily optimistic crowd of free-trade liberals, some of the same people who wanted the United States to topple Somoza and the Shah in 1979, and who denounced "constructive engagement" with South Africa in the 1980's, today argue with equal passion for "constructive engagement" with China. A hefty portion of the Right similarly defends a tolerant attitude toward China, as well as other dictatorial regimes, on the solid Kirkpatrickian grounds that we cannot and must not expect "perfect democracy overnight."

To be sure, the new debunkers of democratization have had to digest the inconvenient fact that democracy can, indeed, spring up "anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances." But this does not appear to have fazed them. Whether the subject is Indonesia, a classic authoritarian government, or, more incongruously, China, which still retains many of the defining characteristics of a totalitarian society, the current wisdom holds that tyrannies should be given time to evolve naturally, which is to say, as Kirkpatrick explained, "slowly."

In one sense, of course, the return of the Kirkpatrick thesis is only part of a broader resurgence of an older and more established tradition in foreign policy: namely, "realism." In the 1950's and 1960's, the leading prophets of this influential school of thought, Hans J. Morgenthau and George F. Kennan, constantly warned against "crusades" on behalf of democracy, which they thought would lead either to nuclear holocaust or to the immoral dominance of one power—the United States—over every other.* Kennan, for one, did not much care for democracy, believing that, in Latin America and other less developed parts of the world, it made for weak and untrustworthy allies in the fight against Communism. And as for democracy in the United States, he once compared it to a dinosaur with a "brain the size of pin."

Today, modern realists from Huntington to Owen Harries, the editor of the *National Interest*, complain about the "arrogance" of American efforts to impose our values on others, while some echo Kennan's view that democracies may be too weak to withstand the onslaught of radicals (in today's circumstances, these are usually not Communists but religious fundamentalists). Still others, like Henry Kissinger, admire the "Asian values" which allegedly form the basis of political society in Singapore, Indonesia, and China: in particular, the emphasis on "order" and "community" over individual rights and freedoms. And the aversion to promoting democracy abroad is also heavily influenced, just as it was in the past, by a deep pessimism about the health of democracy here at home.

This is especially, but not exclusively, true

* I have written on the realists at greater length in "American Power—A Guide for the Perplexed," COMMENTARY, April 1996.

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among conservatives. If, in the 1950's, the realists' hostility to ideological crusades was closely related to their disgust at what they perceived to be the wild and irresponsible behavior on display during the McCarthy era, today many conservatives are worried about the balkanization of American culture, about the impact of immigration and multiculturalism on our national identity, about threats to the American family, about an overweening government bureaucracy on the one hand and rampant individual license on the other. "The central issue for the West," Huntington warns in *The Clash of Civilizations*, "is whether, quite apart from any external challenges, it is capable of stopping and reversing the internal processes of decay."

V

IT IS HARD to say just how much this pessimism about democracy at home has influenced the reorientation of attitudes toward foreign policy, but one suspects it is quite a bit. What is clear, in any case, is that this reorientation has spread far beyond the think tanks and the universities and has profoundly affected the world of policy-makers.

A year ago, a panel of experts, former senior officials, and members of Congress produced a report on American interests in the post-cold-war era.* The panel—which included such eminences as Brent Scowcroft, who served as National Security Adviser under Presidents Ford and Bush; Graham Allison, a top Pentagon official in Bill Clinton's first term; David Gergen, a senior White House official in the Reagan and Clinton administrations; Dole campaign adviser Robert Ellsworth; and Senators John McCain and Sam Nunn—listed those interests under the categories of color-coded poker chips. Blue-chip interests were "vital," that is, "strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation." Red-chip interests, deemed "extremely important," represented conditions that "if compromised would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the U.S. government" to preserve American well-being. There were five of the former sorts of interest, eleven of the latter.

Then came the white chips, among which, at last, democracy made its appearance: the panel deemed it "just important" that the United States promote this interest, but only in "strategically important states" and only "as much as feasible without destabilization." A broader approach, "enlarging democracy elsewhere or for its own sake," was listed at the very bottom, as a translucent chip—something "intrinsically desirable" but having no major effect on the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard the freedom, security, and well-being of Americans.

A decade ago, these conclusions, by these people, would surely have provoked considerable discussion. They would have been taken, and rightly, as a strong repudiation of the policy followed by the Reagan administration, which had made a very high priority out of promoting democracy in such places as El Salvador, Chile, the Philippines, and South Korea, as well as in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union. Today, however, the report's hierarchy of interests aroused not the smallest hint of controversy. Nor was it meant to: rather, it was a conventional representation of conventional thinking.

IT IS true that the Clinton administration, at least until recently, has tilted against this prevailing wind. Indeed, the President and his top advisers have declared the "enlargement" of the democratic sphere to be something of a red-chip or even a blue-chip goal, and in some areas their rhetoric has been complemented by action. Thus, the administration has devoted considerable energy to supporting democratic forces in Russia, often in the face of indifference and skepticism in Congress and the foreign-policy establishment. It has used the process of NATO enlargement as a means of both preserving and encouraging democratic reforms in former Warsaw Pact countries. It played an important role in the continuing transition to democracy in South Africa. In Latin America, it helped support a crucial, second free election in Nicaragua, blocked a military coup in Paraguay and another in Guatemala, and, in a very bold move for which it was harshly condemned by Republicans, even used force to restore a democratically-elected president in Haiti.

More recently, though, the administration's commitment has faltered. Instead of treating the "enlargement" of the democratic world as a high American priority, it has increasingly settled into the establishment view that democracy is only a white or translucent chip and hence subject to barter in return for other benefits, especially of the economic or commercial variety. As Thomas Carothers correctly notes, the administration has "shied away" from pushing hard for democratic reform in Nigeria (which has oil); it has kept largely

* *America's National Interests*, published by the Commission on America's National Interests (1996).

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silent about the move toward authoritarian rule in Kazakhstan (which also has oil); it has been unwilling to take a hard line against the increasingly authoritarian president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian (there is a domestic constituency for continuing aid to Armenia); and it has been sporadic, at best, in its support for democratic reforms in Croatia and Serbia. In Asia, though willing to apply sanctions against tiny and inconsequential Burma for suppressing the democratic movement of Aung San Suu Kyi, Clinton has placed the avidity of American business for "emerging markets" in China and Indonesia ahead of concerns about those regimes' tyrannical practices.

In short, what we are seeing in the administration's moves, as in the experts' report, is the emergence of a new consensus, created more by default than by design and based on today's version of a double (or, rather, multiple) standard. Democracy is to be supported in Western Europe and parts of Central and Eastern Europe, but not necessarily in Southeastern Europe. It is to be celebrated in those Asian nations, like Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, which have already chosen the democratic path; but in those that have not, we are to respect the dictators' right to impose "Asian values" on their people. (In Hong Kong, this may require some particularly uncomfortable contortions, but the pain will pass.) In Latin America, democracy is to be supported almost everywhere, except (if you are a conservative) Haiti or (if a liberal) Cuba. Democracy is altogether too dangerous to support in the Islamic world, except, partially, in Turkey, which is a member of NATO. In the states that once made up the former Soviet Union, the issue is largely one of culture: the peoples of the Baltic states, Russia, and Ukraine are to be held to a much higher standard than the peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia. As for the African nations, if they hold elections, we will be happy; if they cancel them, or start slaughtering each other, we can rest content in the knowledge that they were not ready for elections in the first place.

VI

TWO DECADES ago, it may have made sense to be pessimistic about the prospects for democracy. As Jeane Kirkpatrick noted at the time, autocracy in one form or another was the norm, democracy the rare and fragile exception. Much less understandable is today's dour and cynical view, which is so at odds with the global experience of the intervening two decades.

Are some of the world's new democracies unstable or faltering? Of course they are. But the largest chunk of these troubled nations lies in a part of the world—the former Soviet Union—that possesses a number of unique qualities. The main problem is not that such newly independent states as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Belarus, and Kazakhstan have no history of democracy; there is plenty of evidence from elsewhere in the world that this need not be an insuperable obstacle to democratization. The far greater problem is that they have no history of independent nationhood. Their institutions, such as they are, are the provincial remnants of the Soviet system. As Alexander J. Motyl notes in this year's Freedom House survey,* most of the non-Russian Soviet republics began their lives lacking almost everything—"elites, civil society, rule of law, and the market"—necessary to support almost *any* form of government. It is certainly disappointing that democracy in about half of these countries is in trouble, but the miracle is that it continues to survive in so many. And in any case it is an analytical error to lay disproportionate stress on these failures in any objective global assessment.

Similarly with Africa. Thanks, in part, to breakthroughs in the southern part of that continent, Thomas R. Lansner writes in the Freedom House survey, "the basic terms of debate over governance in Africa is evolving toward respect for fundamental freedoms." Lansner continues:

> Stronger civil societies are emerging in many countries, forging ties beyond race, religion, and ethnicity. African leaders are increasingly accepting that domestic peace demands the consent of the citizenry.

That the African picture is a mixed one is powerfully proved by the horrors of Rwanda and Burundi, the brutal tyranny of Nigeria, and the turmoil of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). But given Africa's history, and given the long-term failure of the United States and other democracies to address themselves to its political problems, the wonder once again is that the continent's record is as mixed as it is.

If it is one kind of mistake to overstate the bad news by measuring today's much-improved reality against some imagined utopia, a much bigger mistake is to shape our policy around the failures. The notion, for instance, that we would do better to

* "1997 Freedom Around the World," *Freedom Review*, January 1997.

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focus on economic development, on establishing the alleged "prerequisites" of democracy rather than democracy itself, simply ignores the lessons of the recent past. As the political analyst Adrian Karatnycky has noted, the states of the former Soviet empire that "have made the greatest progress in creating market economies" have, for the most part, also been those "that have made the greatest progress in consolidating their democratic transitions." Conversely, the failure to achieve economic reform has been most notable in states showing the least progress toward political reform. These findings, Karatnycky argues,

> contradict the argument that economic reform can successfully be implemented by authoritarian rulers who [allegedly] can take decisive and unpopular steps because they are not inhibited by public opinion, . . . rival political parties and movements, or free trade unions.*

What about the idea that democracy leads to instability, bloody ethnic conflict, and war? Surely no one can seriously believe it would have been better to preserve the Soviet or Titoist tyrannies intact after 1989—let alone that this would have been possible. The collapse of these regimes did, indeed, unleash ethnic conflicts and innumerable border disputes. But was democratization to blame? Absent the firm intervention of outside powers, would the break-up of Yugoslavia have been more peaceful if the successor governments had been more uniformly tyrannical? If this century has taught us anything, it is that dictators are perfectly capable of whipping up ethnic and/or nationalist hysteria, and of initiating genocide, for their own purposes.

Finally, the claim by Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder that states in transition to democracy are twice as likely to engage in war cannot withstand scrutiny. Even leaving aside their interpretation of earlier historical events, it is simply wrong to conclude that today's Russia is more warlike because nearly a quarter of the Russian electorate voted in 1993 for a radical nationalist, or because Boris Yeltsin used murderous force against the breakaway republic of Chechnya. The fact is that Zhirinovsky reached his political zenith in 1993, and his support has dwindled ever since. Russia's new democratic system, meanwhile, has compelled the Kremlin to give up its disastrous effort to crush the Chechen revolt. (In the czarist era, Russia fought wars of this nature for decades.) And democratic Russia has likewise peacefully negotiated a settlement with democratic Ukraine for control of Sevastopol and the Black Sea fleet; somehow, one doubts that Stalin, or even Gorbachev, would have been so accommodating. If, in sum, today's Russia offers evidence of anything, it is the generally pacifying effect of democracy on a leadership not traditionally known for its pacific policies.

VII

DEMOCRACY IS not the solution to the world's problems. But it is a better solution than the alternatives. And it is the only solution the United States can ever support with a modicum of enthusiasm or consistency.

This, certainly, was the hard-learned lesson of the Reagan era. Contrary to what everyone expected at the time, the Reagan administration did not ultimately conduct its foreign policies according to the Kirkpatrick thesis, though for a time it tried to do so by instituting closer ties, or at least less hostile relations, with certain dictatorial regimes in Latin America and elsewhere. (Reagan himself had fond feelings for the Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.) But the practice proved unsustainable, and for a simple reason.

Reagan, who was no realist in the Kissingerian mode, elevated the global struggle with Communism to a high priority; rather than accept a condition of permanent coexistence, he took steps to try to undo Communism whenever and wherever the opportunity beckoned. A couple of years into his first term, however, administration officials began to realize that such a battle against the world's most formidable tyranny could not be won by a policy that was officially sanguine about lesser and friendlier tyrannies. It could not be won, that is, under a double standard. And so, instead of accepting the permanence and legitimacy of friendly dictatorships, the administration set about pressing them to reform, often not under conditions of relative calm and safety but when, precisely, they were engaged in "fighting for [their] life against violent adversaries," and not over decades or centuries but quickly.

In El Salvador, in the Philippines, in Chile, and elsewhere, the Reagan team found a way to accomplish this without suffering the fate of the Carter administration in Iran and Nicaragua. In the countries where the "Reagan doctrine" was applied, democratic reformers did indeed gain strength and

* Many conservatives today like to point to the experience of Chile under General Pinochet, whose authoritarian regime gave way under American pressure to today's democracy. But the example tells us less than they imagine. Dictators in Africa and Central Asia are more likely to be kleptocrats in the mold of a Mobutu than free-market reformers in the mold of a Pinochet.

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guerrillas and terrorist groups were indeed weakened. This record looks all the more impressive in the light of today's sober warnings that we should support democracy abroad only when the risks to our security, or to our oil, or to our export markets, are negligible.

One area in which the Reagan-era experience holds obvious implications today is the Islamic world. Clearly it is in our interest to prevent radical fundamentalist regimes from taking power there. In fact, the battle against the radicals in Iran, in Sudan, and in Afghanistan should be waged more tenaciously than it has been. Simultaneously, however, we could and should be holding authoritarian regimes in the Middle East to higher standards of democracy, and encouraging democratic voices within those societies, even if it means risking some instability in some places. At the height of the cold war, the strategic risks in Central America and in Asia were at least as great as they are today in the Middle East—and the gamble, once taken, paid off.

The real question before us today is the same question Samuel P. Huntington posed, in Lincolnesque fashion, seven years ago: "How long can an increasingly interdependent world survive part-democratic and part-authoritarian?" Huntington's point was not that the world would ever *become* completely one or the other, but that a modern, closely interconnected world must move generally either in one direction—i.e., toward greater liberty—or in another—toward greater tyranny. Although the United States may not have the final say over the outcome, as the leading power our say can well be determinative. If we act wrongly, we may lose something even more valuable than our relative security.

FOR THE day we adopt a neutral attitude toward the fate of democracy in the world is the day we deny our own essence, an essence rooted in a commitment to certain principles which we believe to be universal. Anyone worried about our national identity, and about the challenge posed to it by the balkanization of our culture, must know that we can hardly expect to unite our own country if we decide that those principles apply only in a few, rare circumstances and to a limited number of fortunate peoples. Nor can we expect to achieve renewal at home if we conduct ourselves abroad in a mood of despair and cynicism about the very things we hold most dear.

It is often argued that vitality abroad depends first on vitality at home. But the reverse is also true: the active defense of our principles abroad has encouraged us to support them even more vigorously at home. The fight against Nazism and Communism in the 1940's and 50's helped build a national consensus behind the civil-rights movement. In the Reagan era, confidence about America's beneficial role in the world was closely linked with confidence about the democratic project at home. This is a point on which the Samuel P. Huntington of 1991 needed no instruction. "Other nations," he wrote,

> may fundamentally change their political systems and continue their existence as nations. The United States does not have that option. Hence Americans have a special interest in the development of a global environment congenial to democracy.

There is no stasis in international affairs. Some day, the world may well turn back toward autocracy. The United States, the world's leading democratic power, could lose a major war to some rising, nondemocratic power. Or some calamity, whether man-made or not, may devastate the civilization we have created. But precisely because nothing lasts forever, and in the full knowledge that democracy is not inevitable but requires constant effort by those who mean to sustain it, the task facing us is to preserve and extend the democratic era as far into the future as possible. As it happens, and precisely because of the success of earlier policies, the present moment is one of relative safety, and therefore one that offers special opportunities. It would be a timeless human tragedy if, out of boredom, laziness, carelessness, or unfounded gloom, we failed to seize them.

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My War With Allen Ginsberg

Norman Podhoretz

"Allen Ginsberg, Master Poet of Beat Generation, Dies at 70," proclaimed the headline on the front page of the *New York Times* for April 6, 1997. Reading it, I was moved more deeply than I would have expected—not to grief (though an unmistakable touch of sadness did briefly make a surprise appearance) but rather to an overwhelming feeling of wistfulness. It came over me that I had known this man for a full 50 years—50 years!—and that for at least 40 of them I had been at war with him and he with me. It came over me too that even now, with Ginsberg himself carried off the field, his work and its influence would still be there and the war would still go on.

Perhaps the best place to begin in telling the story of that war is a Saturday night in the fall of 1958, when I was twenty-eight and had just left the editorial staff of Commentary to work on a book while also trying my luck as a freelance writer and editor. At about 7:30 P.M., after hanging around all day in the sloppy old clothes I usually wore on weekends, I shaved, put on a clean white shirt with a button-down collar, a rep tie, and a three-piece charcoal-gray flannel suit from Brooks Brothers, and headed down by subway from the Upper West Side of Manhattan to an apartment in Greenwich Village, where Ginsberg and his friend and literary sidekick Jack Kerouac were waiting for me to arrive.

I had never met Kerouac before, but Ginsberg I had first encountered when we were both undergraduates at Columbia in 1946. As a freshman, aged sixteen, I had submitted a long poem about the prophet Jeremiah to the college literary magazine of which he, nearly twenty and in his junior (or senior?) year, was an editor, and to my great delight he had accepted it for publication.

Many years later, I happened upon that poem, and it set my teeth on edge. It also got me wondering how so crude an imitation of Walt Whitman could have met with the approval of Ginsberg, who (like almost every other aspiring young poet in the English-speaking world) was in those days still trying, and quite successfully, to sound like T.S. Eliot. But from a recent glance through the first section of his *Selected Poems: 1947-1995*,[1] I have discovered that he was already making moves toward his famous rejection of Eliot in favor of my then-beloved Whitman. Might he have thought that I was on to something new?

If so, he could not have been more mistaken. When he later abandoned Eliot for Whitman, he was defiantly repudiating what was then the academically correct model and aggressively embracing an unfashionable and largely frowned-upon tradition. (I say "largely" because even at the height of

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[1] HarperCollins, 442 pp., $28.00.

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Eliot's influence, Whitman had his defenders, among them one of Ginsberg's Columbia mentors, Mark Van Doren, whom I vividly recall raising his eyes to heaven and waxing rhapsodic over "Whitman's great poems about death.") I, on the other hand, was only just becoming acquainted with Eliot, and I did not yet know enough to know how retrograde my Whitmanesque frenzies actually were.

It was not long, however, before I found out, and as I did, I also began to suspect—with a little help from teachers and friends—that I was better at writing *about* poetry, and about literature in general, than I was at writing poems. And so, having launched my literary career at Columbia with the publication of a poem which in later years made me cringe, I ended it as a senior with the publication of a precociously poised and accomplished critical essay which, when I came upon *it* in later years, made me smile.

From Columbia I went on to three years of graduate study at Cambridge University in England. While there, I began publishing reviews and essays in academic journals and intellectual magazines on both sides of the Atlantic: *Scrutiny* and *Essays in Criticism* in England, and COMMENTARY and *Partisan Review* in America. After leaving Cambridge for a two-year hitch in the army, I took a job as a junior editor at COMMENTARY and resumed writing about contemporary literature not only for highbrow journals but for more popular magazines as well, including the *New Yorker*, the *Reporter*, and the *New Republic*.

BY THIS time Ginsberg and I had long parted company, and in more ways than one. At Columbia, my friends tended to be straight in both senses of that term, whereas Ginsberg, a middle-class Jewish boy from New Jersey in the process of discovering himself as a homosexual, fell in with an assortment of hustlers, junkies, and other shady or disreputable characters who were always getting themselves and him into trouble.

Prominent among the latter was Kerouac, a Columbia dropout who had already run afoul of the law through a friend of his named Lucien Carr, whom he had originally met through Ginsberg. Carr had stabbed a former homosexual lover to death in the course of repelling an advance, dumped the body into the Hudson River, and then sought out Kerouac to help him dispose of the evidence. Thanks to the botch they made of the job, Carr wound up in prison, though Kerouac, who had been arrested as a material witness, got off scot-free. Shortly thereafter, Ginsberg and Kerouac were caught in bed together in Ginsberg's room in one of the college dormitories. Ginsberg protested (truthfully, it seems) that they "hadn't done anything," but his pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears, and he was hit with a year's suspension.

This was Ginsberg's version of the episode. The official reason for the suspension, however, was not a sexual dalliance with Kerouac but a prank Ginsberg had played on a cleaning woman who, he claimed, had refused to wash the windows of his room. To retaliate against her, writes one of his biographers, Michael Schumacher[2] (confirming the story as I heard it around the Columbia campus), Ginsberg "had traced the words *Butler has no balls* into the grime, Butler being Nicholas Murray Butler, president of the university." Furthermore, suspecting the cleaning woman of anti-Semitism, he had with characteristic perversity "also printed the legend 'Fuck the Jews' into the dirt, and capped off the display with drawings of a skull and crossbones and male genitalia." In those far-off unenlightened days, this was, as the dean of the college put it in a letter to Ginsberg's father, an "enormity," and by itself grounds for disciplinary action.

His exile over, Ginsberg was readmitted to Columbia, but before long he had progressed from getting himself suspended for undergraduate prankishness to getting himself arrested for possession of stolen goods. According to his obituary in the *Times*, they were found in his apartment where they had been stored by one Herbert Huncke, a con man who was Ginsberg's Virgil in exploring the lower depths of Times Square and with whom he was then living; according to contemporaneous Columbia rumor (again confirmed by Schumacher), they were in a car in which Ginsberg was a passenger and which attracted the attention of the police when the driver (a friend of Huncke's) brilliantly turned the wrong way down a one-way street.

This time Ginsberg was in serious danger of going to jail, but thanks to the intervention of several Columbia professors, including Lionel Trilling and Mark Van Doren, he was sent to a psychiatric institution instead. The eight months he spent there were subsequently put to good literary use in "Howl," the poem that would make him famous upon its publication in 1956 in a little paper-covered booklet entitled *Howl and Other Poems*.

NOT HAVING seen Ginsberg since Columbia, and not having heard much about him in the intervening years, I had at first been a little sur-

[2] *Dharma Lion: A Biography of Allen Ginsberg* (St. Martin's, 1992).

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prised to receive an advance copy of *Howl* together with a note from him suggesting that I review it. Evidently, though, he had kept close enough track of me to know that I was now an established critic and therefore in a position to do him a certain amount of good.

I never did review *Howl* itself, but within the next year or so I wrote no fewer than three highly critical pieces—one for the *New Republic*, another for *Partisan Review*, and a third for *Esquire*—about the group which had originally been hailed as the "San Francisco Renaissance" but which soon came to be much better known as the Beat Generation. Ginsberg was one of its two main leaders and spokesmen. The other was Kerouac, whose novel *On the Road* was now being acclaimed as the counterpart in prose to the literary and cultural revolution heralded in verse by the title poem of *Howl*.

Of the three pieces I wrote about the Beats, the one that appeared in *Partisan Review* under the title "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" made the most noise. There my main literary target was not Ginsberg but Kerouac. Through a detailed analysis of his prose (the "spontaneous bop prosody" Ginsberg had sung his praises for creating), I tried to demonstrate that this "prosody" was a cover for Kerouac's "simple inability to express anything in words":

> The only method he has of describing an object is to summon up the same half-dozen adjectives over and over again: "greatest," "tremendous," "crazy," "mad," "wild," and perhaps one or two others. When it's more than just mad or crazy or wild, it becomes "really mad" or "really crazy" or "really wild."

And the "same poverty of resources," I went on to show, was apparent in his treatment of character and plot.

Neither in "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" nor anywhere else did I make any comparable literary charges against Ginsberg. The reason was that in my judgment Ginsberg, unlike Kerouac, was a genuinely gifted writer. Even as an undergraduate at Columbia, he had won my admiration with the amazing virtuosity that enabled him to turn out polished verses in virtually any style: love lyrics with an Elizabethan flavor, heroic couplets in the manner of Dryden and Pope, sonnets or rhymed stanzas reminiscent of Keats and Shelley. Now, through a fusion of Walt Whitman, Christopher Smart, William Blake, and William Carlos Williams, he had evidently found his own true voice. Hysterical and unmodulated, it was not a voice I liked; nor did I believe that the poems constituted the great literary breakthrough Ginsberg vociferously kept insisting he had achieved. Nevertheless, I could not help being impressed by the sureness of his rhythms and his phrasing in "Howl," and by the wit, the humor, and the unexpected imaginative leaps that enlivened some of the other poems in this little collection, especially "America" and "A Supermarket in California."

Consequently, in the *New Republic*, where the first of my pieces about the Beats was published, I singled out Ginsberg as one of the three good poets of the San Francisco Renaissance (the other two were the now almost entirely forgotten Robert Duncan and William Everson, a.k.a. Brother Antoninus). In that piece I characterized "Howl" as a "remarkable poem" whose "assault on America is a personal cry that rings true" and whose "hysteria is tempered with humor," and a year later I also exempted Ginsberg from the severe literary strictures I directed at Kerouac in "The Know-Nothing Bohemians."

By then, however, I had changed my mind about the extent to which Ginsberg was implicated in what I called the "ethos" of the Beat Generation. In the *New Republic*, I had said that Ginsberg shared with all the other writers of the San Francisco group "the conviction that any form of rebellion against American culture . . . is admirable," and that he too regarded "homosexuality, jazz, dope-addiction, and vagrancy as outstanding examples of such rebellion." But unlike the rest, Ginsberg did not, I thought, "glamorize" the "dope-addicts, perverts, and maniacs" he wrote about, and this struck me as an important and redeeming difference.

On further reflection, and after closer study of *Howl and Other Poems*, I realized that I had been misreading Ginsberg here. It now became clear to me that he was just as undiscriminating as Kerouac in his wholesale embrace of the Beat ethos, and that the two of them together were placing themselves at the head of a "revolt of the spiritually underprivileged and the crippled of soul" against "normal feeling and the attempt to cope with the world through intelligence." Indeed, Ginsberg, I held, was in certain respects a more sinister figure than Kerouac:

> At one end of the spectrum, [the Beat] ethos shades off into violence and criminality, main-line drug addiction and madness. Allen Ginsberg's poetry, with its lurid apocalyptic celebration of "angel-headed hipsters," speaks for the darker side of the new bohemianism. Kerouac is milder [though he too] is attracted to criminality.

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Having thus forged a link between the Beats and "the spread of juvenile crime in the 1950's," I concluded with a ringing declaration of war:

> Being against what the Beat Generation stands for has to do with denying that incoherence is superior to precision; that ignorance is superior to knowledge; that the exercise of mind and discrimination is a form of death. It has to do with fighting the notion that sordid acts of violence are justifiable so long as they are committed in the name of "instinct." It even has to do with fighting the poisonous glorification of the adolescent in American popular culture. It has to do, in other words, with one's attitude toward intelligence itself.

This was a scathing indictment, and it bothered Ginsberg so deeply that he would never get over it. And I mean never: here, for example, is the first paragraph of an article about him that was published in the *New York Times* on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, only six months before he died:

> Sometimes the poet Allen Ginsberg still fantasizes about his old Columbia College friend Norman Podhoretz, who became the conservative editor of COMMENTARY magazine. In Mr. Ginsberg's fantasies, Mr. Ginsberg is yelling at Mr. Podhoretz that the CIA is selling drugs in Los Angeles and yelling that Mr. Ginsberg's epic poem "Howl" cannot be read on the radio during most daylight hours because of federal limitations on obscenity. And he is warring with Mr. Podhoretz, who once called Beat poets like Mr. Ginsberg "know-nothing bohemians," about the very nature of poetry itself.

IT WAS on that Saturday night in 1958 that all this yelling first began, and more than a quarter-of-a-century later, in 1985, Ginsberg would tell an interviewer how and why it did:

> Podhoretz had written his attack on Kerouac and what he called "the know-nothing bohemians," this big chunk of leaden prose which people took very seriously as a statement of civilized values. It was in *Partisan Review*, but then the idea spread like trench mouth and finally wound up filtering down to *Life* magazine and the Luce empire. . . . Kerouac's response was, "This is really too bad. That guy's article will probably wind up confusing a lot of people, and he himself is confused. Why don't we have him to tea?" So we called up Podhoretz and invited him over.

The call, which was placed not by Ginsberg himself but by Kerouac's girlfriend, I at first thought must be a practical joke ("I'm here with Allen and Jack who would like you to come see them tonight"). But then Ginsberg got on the line, and the minute I recognized his voice and realized that this was no joke, practical or otherwise, I caught myself desperately fishing for some graceful way to avoid what was sure to be a very unpleasant encounter. No such luck: the fear of seeming cowardly (in my own eyes as much as in his) was at least as strong as my apprehensions over the nasty scene he was undoubtedly preparing for me, and curiosity then also weighed in to tip the scales in favor of accepting this unexpected and wholly unwelcome challenge.

But no sooner had I done so than it occurred to me that if I were to arrive at his apartment needing a shave and dressed in threadbare chino pants and a rumpled old shirt, it would be as if I were donning the enemy's uniform for a foray into his own territory. Worse yet, I might in some sense seem to be currying favor. And then there was another consideration. In "Howl" Ginsberg said that among the "best minds" of his generation who had been driven mad by "Moloch" (that is, life in America) were those "who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits . . . & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors." I suspected that he might have been thinking of me in invoking those "sinister intelligent editors,"[3] and so changing into the uniform of "Moloch" before sallying forth from the Upper West Side to the Village seemed the only honorable and self-respecting thing to do.

Ginsberg's apartment turned out to be much as I would have imagined it: a walk-up in an aging building, sparsely furnished, and badly in need of a paint job. Though he had not yet become a Buddhist, he was already "into" Eastern mysticism, and he was sitting on the floor in what looked to my admittedly inexperienced eyes like some approximation of the lotus position. In addition to Kerouac, there were two other people present whom Ginsberg (in what I took to be a sophomoric affront to my bourgeois expectations) never bothered introducing. One of them was obviously the girl who had placed the call; the other was a young man who seemed to be paired up with Ginsberg. I no

[3] According to the elaborately annotated facsimile edition that was published in 1986, there *is* an allusion to me in "Howl," but this is not it. In referring in line eight of the first draft to "Post-war cynical scholars" (altered in the final draft to "the scholars of war"), Ginsberg seems to have had me in mind—which was, I must admit, rather prescient of him, given that in 1956 I had not yet developed into the cold-war hawk I was subsequently to become.

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longer remember the girl's name, though I do remember that she said not a word the entire evening and lacked only the knitting to complete the impression of a Madame DeFarge making sure that I would be sent to the guillotine when the revolution finally came. As for the young man, he was (as I discovered through the simple expedient of asking him) Peter Orlovsky, to whom Ginsberg would remain married for all practical purposes other than sexual fidelity for the rest of his life.

Kerouac was even handsomer in the flesh than in the pictures of him that had been appearing for months in such mass magazines as *Life* and *Time*. Unlike the others, all three of whom (especially Orlovsky) were predictably and ostentatiously scruffy, his clothes, though casual, were neat and clean. Abnormally conscious as I was at that moment of the issue of personal appearance, and accustomed to the photographs in which he always had a two- or three-day growth of beard, I was also amazed to find him clean-shaven. Had he perversely cleaned himself up for this meeting, just as I had done?

I HAD ANTICIPATED a tense and unpleasant evening, and Ginsberg did not disappoint me. The festivities began with his aggressive insistence that I smoke marijuana with them. I refused—not, as Schumacher claims, because doing so would have been "tantamount to a passing of the peace pipe between factions of warring tribes," but for the same reason I had shaved and changed my clothes before setting out. Presumably relying on Ginsberg's recollection (which had me acting "a little stiff but polite"), Schumacher also claims that "the encounter was civil." But there again he gets it wrong.

In later life, Ginsberg would adopt a sweet and gentle persona, but there was nothing either sweet or gentle about the Allen Ginsberg I had last seen at Columbia ten years earlier, and those qualities were even less evident in the Allen Ginsberg I met again that night. As an undergraduate he had been arrogant and brash and full of an in-your-face bravado; now, just into his thirties, he was still all those things and more, but there was also a fury in him that I had not detected in the past. "In those days," as he himself would later recall, "I'd go into towering rages over literary matters because I was in the middle of a big fight with the whole New York establishment . . . and I was on my high horse." Tonight it was I in whom "the whole New York establishment" was concentrated, and the rage was directed at me.

Some months earlier, the novelist Herbert Gold, who had also been at Columbia with us, had accused me of betraying what he considered one of my main responsibilities as a literary critic. I had written admiringly about the early critical essays of Edmund Wilson; but, Gold said, instead of following the example the young Wilson had set in supporting and encouraging the novelists and poets of his generation, all I ever did was attack or belittle the work being produced by my own contemporaries.

Ginsberg (for all I know having discussed the matter with Gold) now lashed out at me in similar terms. All night long he hectored and harangued me for my stupid failure to recognize both Kerouac's genius and his, and the more I fought back, the harder he tried to make me see how insensitive I was being. It was I, he kept railing, who was the know-nothing, not they.

Rather than rely on what is after nearly 40 years a hazy memory, I want to quote from a letter Ginsberg wrote shortly before this encounter. It was to another mutual friend of ours from Columbia, the poet and critic John Hollander (through whom we had, in fact, first met), and it gives a very good picture of what he would say that night and the tone in which he would say it:

> [Podhoretz lacks] even the basic ability to tell the difference between prosody and diction (as in his . . . diatribes on spontaneous bop prosody confusing it with the use of hiptalk not realizing it refers to rhythmical construction of phrases & sentences). I mean where am I going to begin a serious explanation if I have to deal with such unmitigated stupid ignorant ill willed inept vanity as that—someone like that wouldn't listen unless you hit him over the head with a totally new universe, but he's stuck in his own hideous world, I would try, but he scarcely has enough heart to hear—etc etc—so all these objections about juvenile delinquency, vulgarity, lack of basic education, bad taste, etc etc, no form, etc I mean it's impossible to discuss things like that—finally I get to see them as so basically *wrong* (unscientific) so dependent on ridiculous provincial schoolboy ambitions & presuppositions and so lacking contact with practical fact—that it seems a sort of plot almost, a kind of organized mob stupidity—the final camp of its announcing itself as a representative of value or civilization or taste—I mean I give up, that's just too much fucking nasty brass.

But if the task was so hopeless, why did Ginsberg go ahead and try to explain himself to me anyway? According to Schumacher, he did it not because he aspired to win my "approval of [his] literature or life-style," but because I was an "influential mem-

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ber of the new critical establishment, and . . . it would have been, in terms of literary politics, a *coup* if [Ginsberg] had been able at least to gain a measure of respect from the camp" I represented.

No doubt this consideration did play a part. (So relentless a self-promoter was Ginsberg that as he lay dying he would ask his agent to do something about getting his latest collection reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*.) And yet, as I could sense even then, and as his weirdly unremitting fixation on me was to prove, he *did* crave my approval of his work, and even of his "life-style." For he did not limit himself that night to literary matters or to throwing the accusation of know-nothingism back in my face. He also harped on, and expressed incredulity over, my defense of the "square" way of life (or what today would be called middle-class values) against the Beat assault.

HERE SCHUMACHER for once gets it right when he says that I "was hearing nothing of . . . Ginsberg's harangues against middle-class living and values." Intransigent as I was in turning a deaf ear to his literary counterattack, I was even more determined to stand my ground on the moral and cultural issue between us.

This was not because I was an uncritical admirer of "middle-class living and values." As it happens, in that period I was full of complaint about the "flabbiness of middle-class life" in Eisenhower's America (even using that very phrase in "The Know-Nothing Bohemians"). I also thought that my own generation was much too sober and mature for its own good, and (in a piece for the *New Leader* in 1957) I had predicted that we might soon "decide to take a swim in the Plaza fountain in the middle of the night."

Yet whatever I may have intended in invoking the example of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the youthful spirit of the 1920's symbolized by his drunken hijinks, it was certainly not the "know-nothing bohemianism" of Ginsberg and Kerouac. Indeed, to judge by the way I was living my own life, it was not any kind of bohemianism at all. At the age of twenty-six, the year *Howl and Other Poems* was published, I had married a woman with two very small children, thereby assuming responsibility for an entire family at one stroke; and by the time "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" appeared in 1958, a third child had come along (with a fourth to follow in due course). To support this growing family, I relied on three different sources of income—a full-time job as an editor, free-lance writing at night and on weekends, and lecture engagements whenever I could get them.

Inevitably, then, and along with everything else, it was myself I was defending in fighting the Beats. Ginsberg sensed that there was an extraliterary personal element in my opposition, but in his various attempts over the years to pin it down so that he could dispose of it once and for all, he kept looking in the wrong place. For instance, in a 1987 interview, he would attribute my hostility to disappointed ambition:

> So then . . . Norman realized that . . . he wasn't [a poet]. So he had to go some different way for power, and he got very perverse thoughts and started taking revenge on poetry power.

To still another interviewer in the 80's, he would add an almost comically desperate variation on this theme:

> Now, [Podhoretz] may have justifiably resented me because when I was twenty and editing the *Columbia Review* I'd published a poem of his by cutting it in half to the good part without asking him, which was a mistake, a very juvenile stupidity on my part.[4]

But the truth was that my gratitude to Ginsberg for publishing my poem far outweighed my shock at his editing of it; and if I was ever "taking revenge" on anything connected with him, it was not on his verse but on what he himself called his "vision," which, as he would eventually come to recognize, was "provocative and interesting" to me.

How could it not have been? As against the law-abiding life I had chosen of a steady job and marriage and children, he conjured up a world of complete freedom from the limits imposed by such grim responsibilities. It was a world that promised endless erotic possibility together with the excitements of an expanded consciousness constantly open to new dimensions of being: more adventure, more sex, more intensity, more *life*.

God knows that as a young man full of energy and curiosity, and not altogether averse to risk, I was tempted by all this. God knows too that there were moments of resentment at the burdens I had shouldered, moments when I felt cheated and when I dreamed of breaking out of the limits I had imposed upon myself. Yet at the same time, I was repelled by Ginsberg's world. In the abstract, he spoke for free-

[4] Paul Berman has gone so far as to dig up the two poems of mine that were published in the *Columbia Review* while Ginsberg was there. In a silly piece in *Slate*, Berman quotes lines from both poems that he thinks Ginsberg might have inserted, but flattering though it is to my youthful efforts as a poet to have them attributed to Ginsberg, it was only "Jeremiah" that he edited, and all he did was cut.

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dom from the oppressions of arbitrary social constraints. But his own work made no bones about the concrete consequences of this freedom: they were madness, drug addiction, and sexual perversity.

In praising him at first for not "glamorizing" these consequences, I had failed to grasp just how radical he really was. But now I finally understood that to his antinomian mind, going mad in America was the only way to be sane, to get high on drugs was the only way to be sober, and to "scatter their semen freely to whomever come who may" was the only way to experience sex.

I was, to say the least, no antinomian. Although at that age fantasies of promiscuity were only too appealing to me, I never imagined that there would be anything virtuous or praiseworthy about surrendering to them. And if, in some part of me, I envied "N.C" (Neal Cassady), the "secret hero" of "Howl"—that "cocksman and Adonis" who had "sweetened the snatches of a million girls" and brought "joy to the memory of his innumerable lays"—and if I also resisted the then-regnant Freudian interpretation of "compulsive Don Juanism" as a neurotic symptom, neither did I consider such behavior healthy, let alone heroic. To portray it as such struck me as nothing more than a rationalization—and a morally tawdry and intellectually dishonest one at that.[5]

Where homosexuality was concerned, Ginsberg did not so much glorify as beatify it. Thus, using the most graphic terms for buggery and fellatio, he attached the epithet "saintly" to homosexuals engaged in these practices and also described them as "human seraphim." (In this as well as in other matters, Ginsberg was probably influenced by the use of similar imagery in the novels of the French writer Jean Genet—"another literary cocksucker," as Ginsberg affectionately called him—who was himself canonized as a saint by Jean-Paul Sartre.) Here again, as with heterosexual promiscuity, but with even greater antinomian conviction, Ginsberg was turning the tables and declaring that the perverse was infinitely superior to the normal.

So deeply did he believe this that I even suspected him of having become a homosexual not out of erotic compulsion but by an act of will and as another way of expressing his contempt for normal life. This suspicion was less silly than it may sound. Unlike most of the other closeted homosexuals I had known at Columbia, Ginsberg never gave off any hint or indication that he was anything but straight (and, indeed, as I learn from his biographers, he slept with a fair number of women while he was in his twenties). Nor was I alone in taking Ginsberg for straight. Even someone as close to him as Neal Cassady thought that (as Ginsberg himself put it in an early poem) "I was not a queer at first."

While I am at it, I might as well also admit to another outlandish suspicion I once entertained about Ginsberg's homosexuality. This one, having more to do with literature than with ideology, was put into my mind by a crack that Philip Rahv, the co-editor of *Partisan Review*, once made about Robert Lowell. Always cynical about writers, and especially poets, Rahv professed to believe that the only reason Lowell had converted to Catholicism was out of the hope that it would help him write poetry as good as T.S. Eliot's after *his* conversion to Anglicanism. Well then, might not Ginsberg, with his eye on the great romantic tradition of the *poète maudit* as exemplified by the likes of Arthur Rimbaud, have willed himself into homosexuality out of an analogous hope?

The answer was no. For whereas Lowell left the Church after a while (because, said Rahv with a triumphant smirk, it had failed to do the trick), Ginsberg remained an active and enthusiastic homosexual once he had given up his youthful struggles against it and stopped sleeping with girls.

Not that he ever accepted today's party line of the gay-rights movement that homosexuality is always inborn and never a matter of choice. Peter Orlovsky, whom he once went so far as to list as his "wife" in his entry in *Who's Who*, was, he said, "mostly straight." Kerouac too, though straight, "was willing to sleep with me occasionally." So was Neal Cassady. This was the same N.C. who "sweetened the snatches of a million girls," but he "made a big exception and we slept together quite a bit." And once Ginsberg became famous, he had no trouble luring "lots of straight young kids" into his bed.

Ginsberg also dissented from another of the current twists in the party line of the gay-rights movement, namely, the idea that homosexuals are exactly like heterosexuals in every respect other than erotic orientation, and that they want all the same things, including monogamous relationships cemented by legally sanctioned marriages. In spite of his relationship with Orlovsky, the Ginsberg of "Howl" would have seen such an embrace of middle-class values as a suicidal surrender to Moloch. Nor did advancing age or the pressures of gay political correctness in-

[5] In this connection, it is interesting to note that according to Barry Miles, another of Ginsberg's biographers, Cassady was once clinically diagnosed as sexually sadistic. Cassady, by the way, was not only the "secret hero" of "Howl," but, in the guise of Dean Moriarty, also the hero of *On the Road*.

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duce a conversion to monogamy. Even as late as the last week of his life, when his nurse told him he was HIV-negative, he replied, "That's surprising, given that I've had quite a lot lately," and his very last poem, written when he was on his deathbed, dwelt almost entirely, and in his usual graphic fashion, on his "lovers over half century."

Of a piece with his beatification of homosexuality was Ginsberg's glorification of insanity. "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness," he announced in the opening words of "Howl"—but destroyed, as we immediately discover, only to be reborn into a state of grace, of sensitivity and wisdom, beyond the reach of anyone really crazy enough or sufficiently beaten down to be considered sane in the kingdom of Moloch. I thought this was heartless nonsense. Far from being in touch with a higher reality, the crazy people I had known—and I had known a few—were cut off in the most frightening ways from themselves and the world around them. There was something cruel about drafting such pitiable creatures into the service of an ideological aggression against the kind of normal life to which they would have given everything to return. And it was all the more heartless for parading itself as compassion.

Then, finally, there was the related issue of drugs. As a young man, I was a fairly heavy drinker, as were most of the literary people I knew. It was regarded as manly to drink a lot, and one took pride in being able to hold one's liquor. But we never for a moment doubted that drinking was bad for us—that, indeed, was the whole point. Nor did we ever mistake alcohol for an aid to literary composition ("I never try to write a line when I'm not strictly on the wagon," said Eugene O'Neill, one of the champion literary alcoholics of all time). By contrast, Ginsberg, who wrote "Howl" and a number of other poems under the influence of various drugs, never tired of declaring that they were the route to a higher and deeper consciousness.

From the few serious users I had by then come across, it was obvious to me that this was another egregious lie. Hard drugs like heroin (about which even Ginsberg himself, having "tried it a number of times," would subsequently develop second thoughts) and hallucinogens like LSD (of which he would always be an enthusiastic propagandist) were dangerous to the mind and crippling to the spirit, quite apart from the degrading dependency they created.

As for marijuana, I knew from my own limited experience with it, and from what I could see of its effect on the mental processes of others, that what it mainly did was generate an illusion of heightened awareness which as often as not issued in the solemn utterance of hackneyed "insights" and pretentious banalities. I accepted that it was not necessarily addictive, but that did not mean it was not habit-forming. Moreover, persuaded by propagandists like Ginsberg that they could try marijuana with impunity, untold numbers of kids were getting hooked on it, and a certain percentage of these, having thus dipped a toe into the drug culture, would soon plunge into the deeper and more dangerous waters of LSD or heroin or cocaine.

FOR NEARLY four hours that Saturday night in 1958, we had at each other on all these issues. As Ginsberg would later recall it, Kerouac tried talking to me but "couldn't make a dent." Eventually I "went home and that was the end of it." As I remember it, however, Ginsberg himself did most of the talking and Kerouac, like his girlfriend, hardly said a word. Nor did I just go home. Some time after midnight, Kerouac suggested that we all troop over to see "Lucien," who would just be getting off from work. Obviously he was referring to Lucien Carr, who I had thought must still be in jail for the famous murder he had committed back in the 40's. But it emerged that he had only served a brief term for manslaughter and had been set free many years before. Tired though I was and eager to make an end of what had been a tense and difficult night, I could not resist this chance to meet a legendary figure from my college days. Neither Ginsberg nor the others felt like going out, and so I wound up walking alone with Kerouac to a nearby building in the West Village.

Once, when Hilton Kramer was chief art critic of the *New York Times*, he found himself seated at a dinner next to Woody Allen who asked him whether he felt embarrassed when he ran into people whose work he had attacked. "No," replied Kramer, "I expect *them* to be embarrassed for doing bad work." Lacking his magnificent self-possession, I have indeed always felt embarrassed in such cases, and there have even been times when I have had to stifle an impulse to apologize. This was one of them. Ginsberg's defense of Kerouac as a writer had, just as he later said, failed to "make a dent" on me; if anything, the aesthetic arguments in support of "spontaneous bop prosody" seemed even more nonsensical coming from Ginsberg's mouth than they had coming from his pen. But, disconcertingly, Kerouac was as likable in the flesh as he was repellent in print. In contrast to the seething Ginsberg, who went at me with everything he had, Kerouac (in spite of being the aggrieved party) was so easygoing and charming that I

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could not help regretting the nastiness with which I had treated him and wishing I could say that I had been won over and now saw his novels in a new light.

But of course I could not and did not say this. Instead, what I did as soon as we were alone together was to ask him about growing up in New England in a French-Canadian family. Since this was a subject about which I was genuinely curious and he was happy to talk, the ploy worked, and by the time we reached our destination, my discomfort had all but disappeared—only to be replaced by disappointment over Lucien Carr. In my teenage imaginings, he had been a larger-than-life character; but the man I now met seemed colorless, and he surprised me even more by having a wife and a child (or possibly two). If not for the pervasive air of squalor, the place might have been taken for a conventional bourgeois establishment, and the lingering traces of romance that had been attached to him faded away forever in the hour or so I spent there in his company.

It was about 3 A.M. when Kerouac and I left together. He walked me to the subway station in Sheridan Square and we parted with pleasant words which stood in the sharpest possible contrast to the ominous parting words Ginsberg had flung at me a few hours earlier just as I was leaving his apartment: "We'll get you through your children!"

I NEVER SAW Kerouac again, but there was more yelling by Ginsberg about a year later at a party thrown by Norman Mailer (the same party which became notorious when it ended with Mailer stabbing and nearly killing his then-wife, Adele). In one of those interviews of the 80's from which I have already quoted, Ginsberg would allege that early in the evening I came over to him and said that if he would only get rid of friends like Kerouac, I could help him become "part of the larger scene" and advance his career in New York. Hostility transmuting his normally golden poet's ear into tin, he would paraphrase me as follows: "Why aren't you working with us instead of these people that are so nowhere?"

It is inconceivable that I could actually have said this to Ginsberg, let alone in the words he put into my mouth. After all, though still controversial in some literary circles, he was already a very well-known and widely acclaimed poet, and even if I had been as great a fool as this story makes me appear, I would have had to be completely crazy to imagine that I was in a position to further his career. What I actually *may* have been foolish enough to do was repeat what I had already said several times in print—that I thought he was one of the few Beat writers who had genuine literary talent and that his relentless evangelizing on behalf of the others was obscuring the difference between his work and theirs.

But if there may have been a tiny germ of truth in Ginsberg's version of the story up to this point, most of the rest was pure hallucination:

> I suddenly saw myself in a B movie out of Balzac, with me as the distinguished provincial being tempted by the idiot worldly banker—"We'll give you a career if you renounce your mother and father and your background." It was so corny, like being propositioned by the devil or something, . . . so I started screaming at him, "You big dumb fuckhead! You idiot! You don't know anything about anything!" Now, true to his particular nature, Podhoretz thought I was going to get violent, because that's all he thinks about. . . . Podhoretz yelled, "He's going to get violent," and Mailer came over and took my arm, so I had to reassure him I wasn't going to hit anybody.

That he screamed abuse that night at me is true, but the idea that I would be afraid of trading punches with Allen Ginsberg reminds me of what James Cagney once said about a similar possibility involving Humphrey Bogart: "When it comes to fighting, he's about as tough as Shirley Temple." Nevertheless, I tell the story here because, like Ginsberg's letter to John Hollander, it conveys a vivid sense of the role I played in his paranoid fantasies. Indeed, to Ginsberg himself, this was "an epiphanous moment in my relation with Podhoretz and what he was part of—a large right-wing protopolice surveillance movement."

Here, too, however, as in his allusion to me in "Howl," Ginsberg was being anachronistic. In 1985, when he would recall this "epiphanous moment," I had long since settled into the conservative position to which I am still committed ("for the duration," as they used to say in World War II). But in 1960, when we met at Mailer's party, I was in no sense part of anything that could remotely be described as right-wing. On the contrary, I was then in the final stages of a process that had been carrying me from the liberalism with which I had grown up to the radicalism with which I would be identified for most of the decade ahead.

At the time, Ginsberg was well aware of this development. He knew that, while opposing the Beats, I had been championing the work of Mailer and other cultural radicals like the revisionist Freudian philosopher Norman O. Brown and the

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communitarian-anarchist social critic (and openly homosexual) Paul Goodman, all of whom differed from Ginsberg's crowd in their intellectual rigor and complexity. It would seem, though, that my break with the Left in the late 60's (which included the belated realization that intellectual rigor and complexity did not make bad ideas any less pernicious) would give Ginsberg a chance to read a right-wing motivation back into my criticisms of Beat writing. This political explanation would then join the other two theories he had come up with (my lingering resentment over his editing of "Jeremiah," and my disappointed ambition as a poet) to cover his endlessly nagging worry over my refusal to acknowledge the greatness of the literary school of which he was the founder and the head.

TO THIS day, I have trouble figuring out why my opposition should have bothered him so much. It is perhaps understandable that he would crave my approval when he was just starting out and I was "an influential member of the new critical establishment." But why should he still have needed it when I was no longer even in the game (having pretty much shifted my attention from literary matters to politics and foreign affairs) and the rest of the world was falling at his feet with praises ("Ginsberg is responsible for loosening the breath of American poetry at mid-century," ran a typical comment by the eminent critic Helen Vendler, who assigned him "a memorable place in modern poetry"); heaping laurels on his head (including, among many others, the National Arts Club Gold Medal for lifetime achievement, a National Book Award, and election to the august American Academy of Arts and Letters); and even showering him with riches (a publisher's advance of $160,000—for poetry!—and $1.2 *million* for his papers from Stanford University)?

Was he so disturbed because in his heart of hearts he knew that, no matter what he kept saying aloud, my rejection of his extravagant claims to greatness as a poet and my arguments against his antinomian ideas could not be dismissed out of hand as the ravings of an ignorant philistine who was part of a "right-wing protopolice surveillance movement"? Did those arguments go on sticking so painfully in his craw because he could never come up with answers that truly satisfied him? Might he at moments even have feared that I might be right?

There are grounds for thinking so. Once, for example, under the influence of yage, a psychedelic drug he took repeatedly while in Peru in the early 60's, he had a vision in which it came to him that his "queer isolation" was the price he was paying for his flight from women, which was itself tied to his "lack of . . . contact with birth—my fear to be and to die—to bear life." I myself could not have done better than this in describing what I believed then—and still believe today—to be the spiritual etiology of homosexuality or in stating the deepest of all arguments against Ginsberg's usual antinomian view of it as superior to heterosexuality and everything entailed by a life of involvement with women.

This change in attitude was only fleeting, but while it lasted it thoroughly alarmed William Seward Burroughs who, long before achieving great fame as the author of *Naked Lunch*, was a kind of role model and mentor to Ginsberg, especially in the matter of drugs. Schumacher writes:

> Knowing . . . that Allen, as a result of his yage experiments, had decided he should be kinder to women, Bill would go off on long, wicked anti-woman routines, repeating his theory that women were extraterrestrial agents sent by enemies to weaken the male species. They had "poison juices dripping all over 'em," Burroughs said, and if Allen . . . knew what was good for [him, he] would stay away from women.

Burroughs, incidentally, thought that if Ginsberg were cut open, one of the shaping forces found within him would be Lionel Trilling, the Columbia professor to whom he had been closest as a student. This may provide another possible clue to Ginsberg's compulsive contention with me, since after he left Columbia I became Trilling's favorite student and (in my early days as a critic) his most loyal disciple. In being so exercised over my opinion of his poems and his ideas, then, Ginsberg may have been using me as a stand-in for Trilling, whose judgment of *Howl and Other Poems* had actually been much harsher than mine.

BE ALL that as it may, there came a day when, all of a sudden, in the blink of an eye and out of the blue, a wholly new idea about me entered Ginsberg's mind. Here is how he would describe it in 1987:

> I had a very funny experience a couple of years ago when I dropped some Ecstasy. . . and I suddenly remembered Norman Podhoretz. And I said, Gee, good old Norman, we went to college together. . . . If he weren't there like a wall I can butt my head against, I wouldn't have anybody to hate. And why hate him? He's part of my world, and he's sort of like the char-

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acter Mr. Meany or the Bluenose or the Blue Meanie. At the same time, he has some sense in him. . . . But did I ever really hate him or was I just sort of fascinated by him?

I also saw him as a sort of sacred personage in my life, in a way: someone whose vision is so opposite from mine that it's provocative and interesting—just as my vision is interesting and provocative enough for him to write columns against it in the newspaper. In fact, maybe he's more honest than I am because he attacks me openly. So I should really respect him as one of the sacred personae in the drama of my own transitory existence.

This amazing interview, originally published in an obscure literary quarterly, came to my attention only when it was reprinted in *Harper's* under the title "I Sing of Norman P." By that time, Ginsberg and I had not laid eyes on each other for something like twenty years, and I was naturally bowled over by this transformation in his attitude toward me. But it now also occurred to me that I might have had an inkling or two of it long before.

As far back as the mid-60's, for example, when I would run into him now and then at a party or a meeting, he would sometimes startle me (and perhaps himself as well) with a relatively cordial greeting. In that same period, we also had a curious encounter in Paris, where I was spending a few days on my way to a conference in Yugoslavia. Walking on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, I spotted him coming toward me from the other direction, and having no wish to be yelled at yet again, I decided I would pretend not to have noticed him and pass on by. But before I could execute this evasive maneuver, he waved, ran up to me, and warmly insisted that I have a drink with him at the nearby Café Flore. This was, of course, the hangout of Sartre and his circle, but so far as I could tell from looking around once we were seated, Ginsberg himself was the only famous writer in evidence.

And famous by now not only in America but throughout the world. In recent months alone, as he told me with an excitement seeming to suggest that he thought I would share in his pleasure, he had been lionized in Havana and Prague before being expelled in turn by the Communist governments of those two countries for various forms of homosexual exhibitionism.[6]

From the drink I had with Ginsberg in the Café Flore, I got the feeling that he no longer regarded me as the enemy. But now I was the one being anachronistic. I gather from Schumacher that the real reason he was so eager to sit down with me that day was that "After weeks of nonstop activity and celebrity limelight, he was on his own again, feeling lonely, his ego a bit bruised because he was not as recognized on the avenues of Paris as he had [just] been in England."[7] I also gather from Ginsberg's own statements that his hatred of me was still fresh and remained strong for at least another twenty years, probably even intensifying when I really did begin moving to the Right in the late 60's.

The feeling was mutual. After "Howl," I pretty much lost interest in Ginsberg as a poet, the novelty having, so to speak, worn off. "Kaddish," his elegy on the death of his mother (regarded by many as his best poem), had affecting moments, but everything else, including much of "Kaddish" itself, seemed to be one kind of propaganda or another for the new radical movement of the 60's passing itself off as poetry. In fact, Ginsberg became one of the leading spirits of that movement, and the mounting disenchantment that ultimately led me to break ranks with it was in no small part caused by the triumph of everything he represented over the kind of radical spirit which ten years earlier I had hoped might emerge and which I wanted to help develop.

Now as before, the major difference between us had to do with our wildly contrasting ideas about America. Ginsberg's anti-Americanism of the 50's had been bad enough, but the form it took in the 60's as it exfoliated (or perhaps metastasized would be a better word) was even worse. His disciples and friends now extended way beyond the relatively narrow circle of the Beats to encom-

[6] It has always struck me as odd that so many of the dissidents in Czechoslovakia, all of whom were passionate anti-Communists, should have made heroes out of Ginsberg and other icons of the counterculture, all of whom were equally passionate anti-anti-Communists. Thus, when on a visit of my own to Prague in 1988 I was taken to meet Vaclav Havel, then the most prominent of the dissidents, the first thing that hit my eye upon entering his apartment was a huge poster of John Lennon hanging on the wall. Disturbed, I tried to persuade Havel that the counterculture in the West was no friend of anti-Communists like himself, but I made even less of a "dent" on him than Ginsberg had made on me 30 years earlier.

Conversely, I always thought the Communist governments were stupid in failing to understand that cultural radicals like Ginsberg, who did everything in their power to undermine American resistance to Communism, were their de-facto allies in the cold war. I mean when Ginsberg ridiculed the cold war in a poem like "America" ("America it's them bad Russians. / Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians./The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take our cars from out our garages," and so on), whose political purposes did Havel on the one side, and Fidel Castro on the other, think were being served?

[7] In 1993, the French would make up for this by awarding him the medal of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres.

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pass the entire world of the counterculture, from rock musicians like Bob Dylan to hippies and "yippies" like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin to a variety of "gurus" peddling one form or another of Oriental mysticism. What they all had in common was a fierce hatred of America, which they saw as "Amerika," a country morally and spiritually equivalent to Nazi Germany. Its political system was based on oppression, to which the only answer was resistance and revolution; and its culture was based on repression, to which the only answer was to opt out of middle-class life and liberate the squelched and smothered self through drugs and sexual (preferably homosexual) promiscuity.

I simply could not stomach any of this, least of all the disgusting comparisons to Nazi Germany. Even when I was at my most radical, I still loved America, and my own utopian aspirations were directed at perfecting, not destroying, it. It went without saying that there were problems and flaws, above all the plight of the blacks and the poor, but I was confident that they could be effectively addressed through programs of radical reform within the going political system.

As for Vietnam, like Ginsberg and his friends, I was opposed to the war, but unlike them, I thought it was a mistake, not a crime. I hoped for a negotiated settlement that would allow us to salvage our honor by withdrawing without abandoning the South Vietnamese to the Communists of the North, whereas in their hatred of America they yearned for us to be defeated and humiliated and the Communists to win.

In general, and over and above the specifics, I believed that the revolutionism of the New Left was both futile and dangerous. As the 60's wore on, I also came increasingly to regard the counterculture as a species of nihilism that was wrecking the lives of more and more of the young people who were following through on the injunction of Ginsberg's great friend and fellow pusher of LSD, Timothy Leary, to "turn on, tune in, and drop out."

I was right about the counterculture, but I was wrong in thinking that my utopian fantasies of perfection through radical reform had any better chance of success than any other brand of utopianism, or that they could compete, especially among the young, with the seductively tantalizing promise of freedom from the responsibilities and constraints of a normal adult life. Back in 1958, as I was leaving his apartment, Ginsberg had shouted, "We'll get you through your children," and so it was turning out.

Not, thank God, where my own children were concerned. Two of them would still be too young to feel the impact of the 60's, while the older two, both girls, would escape with minimal damage. But some of their friends—bright, beautiful creatures whose families were prosperous enough to send them to a fashionable private school in New York—would not be so lucky. One would suffer a drug-induced breakdown and go on to spend years of her life in and out of a series of mental hospitals; another would become a hopeless junkie; and a third would be raped and murdered while recklessly hitchhiking on a lonely road in the dead of night. And then there were the young men who would run off to Canada to avoid the Vietnam draft or leave college to join a commune or hang out in cesspools like Haight-Ashbury where the drugs were plentiful and the sex was easy, and who would never manage to climb out of the hole of failure they had been encouraged by Ginsberg and his disciples in the counterculture to dig for themselves.

As the 60's wore on, I came more and more to see all this as a new kind of plague, and when in the late 70's I wrote a book about my break with radicalism, I ended with a lament for the victims it had claimed among the "especially vulnerable" young. They had, I said, been inoculated against almost every one of the physical diseases which in times past had literally made it impossible for so many to reach adulthood. But against a spiritual plague like this one they were entirely helpless.

Nor could they count on any help from their parents, who had themselves been so blinded by the plague that they mistook their children's "contemptuous repudiation of everything American and middle-class . . . for a form of idealism," and "went on insisting, even when the evidence of sickness and incapacity stared them full in the face, that the children were models of superior health." Shades of the antinomian propaganda Ginsberg had done as much as anyone else in America to spread.

So, too, with the teachers of the period, who surveyed a mass of desperately disordered and disoriented young people refusing to take their appointed places in the world, and then proceeded to pronounce them, in the unforgettable words of Professor Archibald Cox of the Harvard Law School, "the best informed, the most intelligent, and the most idealistic" generation ever born in America. Again, what was this but a toned-down version of the opening words of "Howl" translated into the language of the liberal establishment?

AN EVEN more telling sign of the degree to which the hated establishment wound up capitulating to the Beats would come in 1987, when the city

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council of Lowell, Massachusetts, decided to build a new park dedicated to the memory of its famous native son, Jack Kerouac. I happened just then to be in the middle of a four-year stint as a syndicated weekly columnist with my home base in the *New York Post*, and I devoted a piece to expressing my amazement at the fact that the people of Lowell should wish to memorialize the author of a series of books heaping abuse on the way of life lived in, precisely, places like Lowell. It was true that for a few years before he died in 1969 at the age of forty-seven, a very ill Kerouac had settled down in a suburb with his wife and mother, returned to the Catholic Church, and also moved to the Right in his political views. But it was not this Kerouac the world remembered and to whom the city of Lowell was preparing to build a monument; it was the younger Kerouac who, along with Ginsberg, had spawned the counterculture of the 60's with its "hatred and contempt for everything generally deemed healthy, decent, or normal."[8]

It was this piece Ginsberg was referring to in the 1987 interview in which he said that I was "still denouncing Kerouac as a moral degenerate" and that I was also writing "columns . . . in the newspaper" against his own "vision." But as I have already noted, instead of being angered or offended, he spoke of me in respectful and even affectionate terms for the first time since we were both kids in college.

He then followed up—I forget exactly when—with a handwritten note inviting me in the friendliest terms to a seminar at the Naropa Institute in Colorado, a Buddhist college he had helped to found (and which became, much more suitably than the park in Lowell, a monument to Jack Kerouac under the name "The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics"). *This* invitation, unlike the one 40 years earlier to his apartment in the Village, I unhesitatingly declined, knowing that the new Ginsberg's lovingkindness would put me even more uncomfortably on the defensive than the young Ginsberg's rage had done.

I heard nothing further from Ginsberg until he once again described his new attitude toward me in that piece I cited at the outset which the *New York Times* did about him on the occasion of his seventieth birthday:

> One day a few years back, a "light bulb went on in my head," Mr. Ginsberg said in the garden of his favorite Polish restaurant on the Lower East Side. "I thought of Norman. I thought how can I hate him? All those years he's had to suffer all my contumely in my head. It's served as an education, to make me think my thoughts. He's been a great help." Now, said Mr. Ginsberg, Mr. Podhoretz is "kind of a sacred object on my horizon."

Another invitation then arrived, not from him but from a television producer who wanted to put us on the air together. But once more I passed up a chance to see him again. Six months later he was dead.

THE RULE is never to speak ill of the dead, but the obituarists and commemorators who wrote about Ginsberg upon his death could not have broken the rule even if they had wanted to, since they could see no ill in him to speak of at all. Except for George Will in his syndicated column and an anonymous editorialist in the *New Criterion*, everyone else reached lyrically for the stars. In the *New Yorker*, David Remnick, for whom "the distinguishing feature of Ginsberg's character was his generosity, his sweetness, his openness," accorded his work a place among the classics of the literary canon. In the *Washington Post*, Henry Allen also pronounced him "a great poet" who spoke "for the right and need of Americans to express personal and universal truth." In *Newsweek*, David Gates concluded that "Ginsberg's lifelong work was to say good-bye: in joy and sorrow, love and longing. And to remind us that ours is too." In the *Nation*, John Leonard said that "his ultimate role at every engagement in our second Civil War was as a nurse, like his buddy Walt Whitman."

And the encouragement he gave to drugs and sexual licentiousness of every kind? To the extent that this was mentioned at all, it was breezily treated as a charming foible or as an expression of ideas that might have seemed a bit extreme in 1956 when (to paraphrase one elegist) "repression and conformity, and not the Russians and the Chinese, were the true enemies of America" but that were in the end revealed (in the words of another elegist) as "the beginning of a renewal of American values."

[8] Around this same time, another and very similar event occurred about which I also wrote a column. On the 25th anniversary of the publication of Joseph Heller's novel, *Catch-22*, the Air Force Academy in Colorado staged a conference in its honor—in honor, that is, of a book viciously defaming the branch of the very service in which the Academy was preparing its students to serve. For the Air Force as Heller portrays it is an organization run by idiots and lunatics who send countless young boys to their death for no reason other than the furthering of their own personal ambitions and the lining of their own pockets. In honoring *Catch-22*, the Air Force Academy, an institution whose entire reason for existence was to teach the arts of war, was also implicitly endorsing Heller's justification of draft evasion and even desertion as morally superior to military service.

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Ginsberg was also fulsomely praised as a pioneer of the gay-rights movement, which indeed he was. Yet so far as I have been able to determine, no one thought to draw a connection between the emergence of AIDS and the rampant homosexual promiscuity promoted by Ginsberg (with buggery as an especially "joyful" feature that is described in loving detail in poem after pornographic—yes, pornographic—poem). And I could find only one mention (in the *Weekly Standard*) of Ginsberg's active sponsorship of the abominable North American Man Boy Love Alliance (NAMBLA), an organization devoted to the legalization of homosexual pedophilia. ("I don't know exactly how to define what's underage," he once explained, quickly adding that he himself had "never made it with anyone under fifteen.")

THERE ARE writers of my generation with whom I dealt harshly when I was a young critic but who, as we grow older together, I find myself reading with more sympathy and greater pleasure. As Ginsberg said of me, they are "part of my world." Because we cut our teeth on and were shaped by the same books and the same movies and the same radio programs and the same public events, we carry with us a shared frame of reference and we speak the same language even when we use it to disagree. As the years roll by, and with the arrival of successive generations treading all of us down, this common background of experience has bred in me a sense of kinship with these writers that I did not feel when we were young.

Of course there is the additional fact that some of them, like Philip Roth and John Updike, have developed into better writers than they were then. Roth in particular has moved beyond the adolescent snobbery with which he used to regard everyone but himself and his friends and has come to display a range of sympathetic understanding rarely even hinted at in his early work. Indeed, having once expressed a loathing no less ferocious in its own way than Ginsberg's for the life lived by most people in America, Roth (as I read his most recent novel, *American Pastoral*[9]) has now landed firmly on the side of such people against the intellectuals and academics who still maintain the sneering and patronizing attitudes he himself held in days gone by.

No such change ever came over Allen Ginsberg, for all the "generosity," the "sweetness," and the "openness" that David Remnick and others found in his character when he too was getting on. As a poet, he never grew or developed (even most of his admirers think that nothing he wrote after 1959 was as good as "Howl" and "Kaddish"), and he went to his death still preaching the same false and pernicious ideas about life in America with which he burst onto the scene in the 50's and which spread (to borrow the image he once used about my ideas) "like trench mouth" through American culture in the 60's.

Fortunately these ideas are not for the moment especially fashionable among the middle-class young. And yet there is enough resemblance between the current situation and the cultural climate of the 50's to fear that his siren song may yet find its insidious way into the ears of yet another generation of restless kids, misleading and corrupting them as it did so many of their forebears in the all too recent past. And so I would still say today what I said ten years ago in concluding my column about the park dedicated to Kerouac in Lowell:

> "I'm worried about a role model for kids," explained the lone member of the Lowell city council who voted against the Kerouac memorial. He is right to worry. After all, Kerouac and Ginsberg once played a part in ruining a great many young people who were influenced by their "distaste for normal life and common decency."

That last phrase, I hastened to point out, came not from the Lowell city councilman but from George Orwell, who was talking not about Ginsberg and Kerouac but about some of his own contemporaries in the England of the 1930's whose writings expressed many of the same attitudes. As against them, Orwell insisted, "The fact to which we have got to cling, as to a life-belt, is that it *is* possible to be a normal decent person and yet to be fully alive." Instead, we were memorializing Ginsberg and Kerouac, thereby further weakening our already tenuous grasp on Orwell's saving fact, and abandoning the field once again to these latter-day Pied Pipers and their current successors who never ceased telling our children that the life being lived around them was not worth living at all.

I was of course thinking there of the children through whom Ginsberg promised to "get" me and my kind as I was leaving his apartment that Saturday night back in 1958. In the end, having kept that promise, he decided to be magnanimous in victory and forgive me. But it is because of them, as well as all the others who may be waiting in the wings, that I still cannot bring myself to forgive *him*, not even now that he is dead.

[9] See "An American Tragedy" by Carol Iannone, beginning on p. 55—ED.

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The Seduction of Steven Eskanazzi

A Story

David Gelernter

"ABSOLUTELY NOT. Crazy. Ridiculous." Eskanazzi's brain is fast and he always speaks fast.

"Listen," she says. "Please. Please." Looking at the table.

"For this," he says, "*this* is the reason? Y'know what *time* it was in Jerusalem? I thought you were *dying* or something."

"It was a terrible thing to do," she says, "but listen. Have. Please." She turns her head away so he can't see her face. Gathers the blonde hair at the back of her neck in a tight, vague grip. They are alone on the back terrace of a country club on a spring morning, ten o'clock, 1978. The sun bright and shadows sharp and the flag straining and snapping in the breeze.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I'm sorry. But there is nothing, zero, nothing, I can do about it and I don't want to put it this way but honestly, this girl, she wants to marry a *sheigetz*, fine, let her do it, *gezunterheyt*, because honestly, this girl"—and he stops short. He scowls at the table. And looks up again: "This girl is a slut. And this should be her worst problem, marrying Horst Wessel or whoever the hell he is, this gem of an individual." And turns sharply away, looking in anger at the perfect green slope of the golf course in the distance.

When she collects herself and looks at him again, her blue eyes are bright with desperation and her lips are pressed hard against her fist; you see her face only from the nose up.

"I'm sorry," he says. "But it changes nothing; what can I do? Nothing. Forget it."

For a Jewish girl to marry a non-Jew was an everyday event in 1978, but you could still find people who were frantic to stop it, as if you could keep the dandelion puffball of the modern Jewish community from scattering elegantly on the breeze. Rabbi Steven Eskanazzi was twenty-seven at this point: slight, with a white shirt and knitted black yarmulke and wavy black hair, offhand manner, cold voice, hot eyes. Many of the smartest young Orthodox men were ordained as rabbis, meaning that they knew Talmud and *halakhah* and the fine points of Jewish life. Only a few became pulpit rabbis. Eskanazzi never dreamed of it. Mostly they went into medicine or law, business or teaching, academia or accounting or science. They went everywhere and did everything—jumped in but stood apart. And they smiled in a certain way, like the man who knows a secret and is content to keep it. Who knows more about you than you do about him.

In 1978 you could see these modern-style Or-

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thodox Jews all over New York, and they looked like everyone else, except for the men wearing yarmulkes. Not all the men—but the younger they were, the more secure in this idea of plain American Orthodox Jews, the more likely to wear their yarmulkes full-time. The smile didn't matter to Gentiles but drove other Jews crazy or, now and then, brought one to a dead halt and left him puzzled and uneasy, as if he had seen his *Doppelgänger* in a dream.

"LISTEN." SHE looks at the table. (The wind playing delicately with the points of her collar. Her neck and the triangle of skin inside the collar's V and her strand of tiny carnelian beads in shadow.) "He's not just a German. He *looks* like a German. He's got this smug"—words on tiptoe to keep from crying. She stops. The flag strains tight and beats. "If it were just any girl. But Jackie. . . ."

"*But Jackie*—you're too much of a mensch to be her friend. I know you were big pals a long time ago, so what? She's your cousin—big deal, g'bye, forget about it. Y'know what?" He stops as the waiter puts black coffee before him, coffee and half a grapefruit in front of her. The food is supposedly kosher, but he doesn't believe it is seriously kosher and won't eat it. In 1978 the Orthodox community is holding together and the rest is dandelion seed giving way before the breeze. A certain kind of person saw it all in agonizing slow motion as it happened.

"*Coffee* and *grapefruit*?" he says. "Yeccccch. Isn't that like—acid and acid?" Screws up his face. She finds his vivid repugnance-face so little-boyish she has to smile. The smile is gone instantaneously. He looks (playful and suspicious) at her grapefruit. His moods are intense, but they come and go abruptly.

"Listen," he says. (The waiter has taken his ostentatious indifference back inside.) "I'm really sorry, okay? It shouldn't happen to anyone. If I could do something I would. But I can't. So listen. You look great, how're you doing? How's—what's his face—Edward?" The day before yesterday he had been in Jerusalem working on his Ph.D. dissertation, living in a yeshiva. She phoned and he came—back to Great Neck, Long Island, where they had grown up on the same block.

"He's okay."

"When's the wedding?" Teasing.

"No wedding," she says; with her eyes unfocused she spoons a wedge of grapefruit. They have known each other since he was ten, she was eight; she has never won an argument with him. Not in seventeen years. She never expects to. And yet he would do anything for his friends. That is the only issue. His kindness. She is not Orthodox but cares about Jewishness and teaches at a liberal Jewish day school. They have known each other for a long time. The flag beats and snaps. Her hair (pinned up with a barrette on one side) stirs in the breeze. He steadies his yarmulke with one hand; with the other he squeezes open the clip and refastens it. He would do anything for his friends. "You would do anything," she says, looking at her grapefruit, "for your friends."

"Anything? Yeah?" The boyish smile. "I wouldn't say *that*."

"You dropped everything and flew halfway around the world to come and see me."

"Sure, I thought you were dying—I mean not literally, God forbid—I thought you were in big, big, *big* trouble."

"I am."

He sighs—"Please. All right, you are. Fine. You are. But there's nothing I can do about it and there's nothing *you* can do about it, so honestly—drop it. You did a *mitzvah*, you tried, you failed, fine, forget it; eat your grapefruit."

"But there *is* something you can do about it. There is."

Shakes his head stiffly in repugnance. "What d'you want?—maybe I should call her in for a little lecture on Jewish marriage? Jewish ethics? I'm sure that'll make a big impression. That'll go over big. Her entire life is a negation of Jewish ethics. Honestly. Please."

"There *is* something you can do." Conspiratorial and stubborn. "There is. It's this: take her out. That's the only thing. If you did, she would listen to you."

"*Take her out*?" When he delivers a sentence slowly the effect is withering. "Like on a *date*?"

"Yes."

He shakes his head so briskly it is more like a shudder. "Please. Please. This is loony-bin stuff."

"She admires you very much. She looks up to you very much. At one point she was in love with you. I think she still is."

He squints at her. The flag straining and beating; the air breathlessly bright. "You could seduce her," she says, "if you wanted to."

"Libbie," after a moment, "I love you but you've cracked."

"Just once? Take her out just once?"

"You've cracked."

"Just once?"

"Not only would I make a fool of myself by asking her, but the whole thing—honestly—I can't be-

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lieve we're even *discussing* this." He only dates Orthodox women because he can't picture marrying any other sort.

"I'll set it up? Just once. Just once?

"Jackie was in love with you," she continues after his silence. His brown eyes have lost their glitter and gone deeply translucent. Root-beer brown: she remembers thinking of them in those terms years ago. Soda in clear glass in sunlight, the bubbles streaming. "She mentioned you very recently, out of the blue. Even I was surprised."

"*In love*. Please. Years and years ago," his repugnance-voice and repugnance-face returning—he takes in the green fields with a squirmingly annoyed glance and turns back—"she claimed to have a thing for me which lasted, what, y'know, ten minutes, and the *reason* she had it is because I was the one boy in the neighborhood who wouldn't roll over and play dead for her, as you know perfectly well, the one boy inside a 100-mile radius centered on her bedroom—except for the other Orthodox people in the neighborhood—who had no interest in her whatsoever. *In love*. Please."

"I'll set it up. Just once?"

The breeze quiets for a moment and they hear a car grinding the dry pebbles in the parking lot. A distant lawnmower.

She doesn't know what passed between her cousin and Steven Eskanazzi ten years ago, but Jackie has tormented her on the subject ever since. "Wouldn't you *love* to know what happened between Stevie and me?" With her big bright gorgeous, teasing, needling smile. Her inability to sit still, and her grace that made you catch your breath. Libbie was said to be pretty, Libbie was arguably prettier than Jackie, but then again Jackie warped the entire sexual field of the earth from Great Neck to the South Pole merely by existing. Six years ago they were home from college on winter break, alone in the late afternoon in Jackie's parents' living room, Libbie barefoot in faded jeans on the floor, dangling her long undergraduate hair like drapery so it just grazed the thick carpet, aware of her reflection in the bare black of the picture window, and Jackie putting a tray with Japanese tea on a piano bench and needling her ("Wouldn't you *love* to know what happened between Stevie and me?"), then grabbing a shiny red throw pillow and pummeling her playfully over the head—as smiling Libbie, long-haired and lonely, shielded her head with folded arms—and Jackie dropped into a fencer's crouch, menaced her with an imaginary foil for three seconds and then dissolved into musical giggling and served tea.

That was '72 and now it was '78. Nineteen seventy-eight was a sour time. The country felt queasy and went around in a fog. Yet it still had the impression that its sickness was temporary. Would vanish if it could only get away and lie down. Inflation and the oil cartel and the rising price of gold and President Jimmy Carter's face made people nervous; his humorless smile made people cringe. Yet the nation was rich and still getting used to its wealth—to the after-effects of the huge, unprecedented boom that had only recently tapered off. Near the country club with the patio and the flag and the almost-kosher food, an A&S department store was set like a sprawling military complex in a vast parking lot in a private dell. Cars arrived and departed all day and into the evening. Women got out of their spanking-new Toyota Celicas and Honda Accords and Saab 900's and diesel Benzes (Detroit was flat on its back), slammed the doors smartly, strode into the building and returned with big shopping bags. A tony and expensive store that was always mobbed.

"You don't know anything about women," Libbie tells Steven as they walk from the patio toward the parking lot, "and you don't know anything about yourself." With a nervous sidelong smile. He has agreed to go out with Jackie exactly once, if Libbie can set it up. Libbie has plotted to tell him this for years, in precisely these words. The call to Israel and the proposition this morning are two death leaps she attempted only because she had somehow got herself, twice, onto the high diving board with no other way down. Two leaps with eyes shut and brain disengaged. And they have both come off, which makes her feel strange. She might have been sixteen when these words first occurred to her: You don't know anything about women, and you don't know anything about yourself.

He shrugs. "Maybe not." A moment later: "Y'know, I drove a Fiat in Israel, too. I mean, the times I had a car. Not all that often." Jingling his keys restlessly in his pocket. They've reached his dark green Fiat 850, a two-seat convertible with its top down—cheap, pretty, and unreliable. He opens her door. She eases herself (smoothing her pleated skirt underneath) into the low seat. She buckles the seat belt, slips off her flats, draws her crossed ankles tight beneath her seat and against the right door. She's tall and the car is small. He has shut her door, walked around and opened his own; he slides in beside her. "Who owns this place?" he asks. Starting the engine. "Does it have something to do with your family, did someone tell me once?"

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"Not that I know of. I think some sort of board owns it. I don't know." A painful blaze of sunlight off the chrome rear-view mirror as she turns her head.

He shifts into reverse and winds backward in a tight arc as the gears sing; shifts to first and crunches over the pebbles to the long asphalt driveway. Once he gains the driveway, the car moves fast enough to make conversation impossible for the rush of wind. He drives her home. She watches him shift gears. She loves watching him shift gears: his offhand precision as he thinks frowningly about something else.

THAT AFTERNOON he parks a few blocks from the eastern outpost of the New York City subway at 188th Street in Queens. Carefully he hooks one end of the steel crook-lock around the steering wheel, the other end around the clutch. He closes the top, locks the door, and sets out for the station down residential blocks of immaculate small houses on tiny lots—past mirrored spheres and fiberglass fawns and a concrete Virgin in a blue-and-white tiled grotto. The station underground is brown and cool, with a row of identical posters advertising John Travolta in a white suit, arms flung wide. The platform is nearly empty, hollow silence echoing to infinity down the dark tunnel as he waits.

He rides the F, D, and 1 trains 45 minutes into the city, with a melody in his mind the whole time, he can't get rid of it; emerges at Broadway and 72nd and starts for the small yeshiva where several of his best friends teach. He has taught there too. It's an oddball institution: certain high-school students are there part-time, certain college graduates full-time. The streets are wan and tired. A cab rattling by at top speed leaves paper trash aswirl in the gutter. He hasn't been at the yeshiva in five months. He walks faster as he gets near.

The medium-large room on the third floor is full of voices. Five long tables—caterer's equipment with Formica tops, a makeshift set-up. They are all covered with big open books and students cluster around them, listening to a teacher in small groups or studying head-to-head in pairs. Most are in open shirts; their knitted yarmulkes bob in a dozen colors. Three walls are covered floor to ceiling with the black, brown, and burgundy of Hebrew books packed and piled onto shelves, bare of dust jackets, the titles picked out in gold. Coffee cups and rumpled copies of the *New York Times* scattered about; the windows on the fourth wall give out onto 73rd—they face north and admit no sun, a row of pale bright rectangles that leave the inside feeling sheltered and dark.

The warm prickly voices tangling in argument and untangling and the enveloping books he loves the sight, smell, heft, and feel of and the intellectual tautness and the haphazard dusty holiness of the air make this room, for Steven Eskanazzi, the best place in the world. Rafi coming toward him. They hug each other. Rafi with his woolen hair and big, permanent smile and suntanned look. A half-dozen other young men surround them. The students watch from their seats; even those who have never studied with Steven Eskanazzi know about him. He is famous in these parts as a Talmud scholar, but prefers to work on the Bible. His dissertation is on Psalms.

He joins Rafi at a long table. Others pull up chairs and they talk: Israel, his work, their work, inflation, Jimmy Carter, the Arabs, Menachem Begin, Rav Soloveitchik (a four-times longer topic than any other), the Lincoln Square Synagogue, the Carlebach *shul*, Meryl Streep (*l'havdil*), *Saturday Night Live*, Woody Allen, the wedding of Daniel Fein, the wedding of Ernie Lasker. Then Steven says abstractly, "I have this tune in mind. I can't get it out of my head. It keeps repeating. I heard it on a record a long time ago, scratchy old record—a *hazzan* who wrote his own music singing in a haunting, moving kind of way, *kol yisroel yesh lohem helek l'olom ha'bo*."

They all know the words, the start of *Pirkei Avos*, the collected moral precepts of the Mishnah: all Jews have a place in the world to come.

"Anyone ever heard this record? Know the name of the *hazzan*? The sleeve had a small gold label, in Yiddish I think, I can picture it. The saddest music I ever heard."

No one recognizes his description. He leans his head backward into laced-together hands, tips the chair back on its hind legs and stares at the ceiling. At other tables the voices go on around him but they all, somehow, take account of his presence.

A moment later Rafi asks him something about a passage in the large open volume of Talmud before him. He brings his chair back to earth and answers. Rafi asks something else. Steven quotes a passage from a commentary. Rafi asks something else. "Where's the *Ran*?" Steven asks. He stands impatiently and scans the bookshelves, jingling coins in his pocket. He locates the large, slim volume of Rabbenu Nissim's 14th-century glosses on the laws of betrothal, pulls it down and returns to the table. Flips it open. Finds the page.

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The moment after he points to the right passage, he is looking out the window (the pale bright rectangle of street light) and hearing nothing. He and Jackie as teenagers sitting on the edge of her bed as he scowls at an automobile manual she has convinced him to look at. His astonishment at the bedroom, like a parody of a girl's bedroom, his suspicion that she has set it up this way to make fun of him—he wouldn't put it past her, yet it seems a touch too bizarre. The stockings droop gracefully from the bureau drawer, the pile of neatly-folded laundry with a bra on top. Otherwise it is what you expect, the portable phonograph with the lid up, a falling-over pile of 45's beside it and albums stacked face-forward against the wall. The garish psychedelic posters—a worm in hot yellow-green crawling on a black field, the flower explosion in orange, yellow, and fluorescent-pink, the "War is Unhealthy for Children and other Living Things" in black lettering on white, the stuffed animals tumbled on the bed. She is amused, more than amused, by the way he feels obliged to stand aloof from the sex culture of 1968. Sitting next to him with her legs crossed in her skirt that is short even when she stands. Then she slides off the bed and kneels facing him, settles back on her haunches pulling the skirt tight around her thighs, moving her head back and forth to a snatch of a Beatles song under her breath ("and dance to a song/that was a hit before/your mother was born"); she is always singing; then up on her knees and yanks the pillow off the bed, and settles back again hugging it to her chest with both arms; her sleeveless blouse; lays her head sideways along the pillow's top edge: his mind losing traction. Who's kidding whom?—you don't wind up in a girl's bedroom by accident. Not by accident. Her needling impossible smile. Someone is talking to him, proffering a large object of white cloth.

"*Minhah*?" The head of the yeshiva, smiling. Steven smiles back, gets to his feet and takes the tallis, walks to the front of the room and stands facing the small, upright wooden box with the red velvet curtain. It serves as the ark and holds a Torah. A noisy basso scraping of chairs, and then 24 men and boys assemble in a loose standing group behind him. A whole chaotic establishment rising to pray—the most remarkable fact about any yeshiva. He drapes the tallis over his head, says the blessing, and places it stolewise over his shoulders, hitching up each side so it won't touch the floor.

He is supposed to start the afternoon prayers but doesn't. He touches the fingers of his left hand to his forehead and stands silently. Swaying slightly forward and back. They look at his shoulders or out the window; they wait. Through open windows they hear the panting rumble of a truck drawn up at the curb. He stands silent. It seems like a long time. At length he opens the book in his right hand, presses it to his chest, and with his eyes closed starts the *Ashrei*, and 24 voices join in behind him. Libbie in her tiny office is on the phone to her cousin.

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The Colonel and the Lady

Joseph Epstein

I got a message from [Robert] Redford that they had decided not to shoot the one scene [in All the President's Men*] in which I was portrayed. I was told that no one understood the role of a publisher, and it was too extraneous to explain.*

—Katharine Graham

What do newspaper publishers do? Traditionally, they have been owners of the majority share of stock in a paper. They have had ultimate responsibility for the paper's financial fate. They have tended to represent it before the city in which it is published. In matters of newspaper policy—especially in disputes over that policy—they are the final arbiters. They determine the (general) editorial position, the candidates the paper will endorse for political office, the causes to which it is sympathetic or antipathetic. The analogy begging to be made here is with the captain of a ship, except that in this case the captain happens also to be the owner.

Which brings me to that Captain Ahab among publishers, Robert Rutherford McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune*: the "World's Greatest Newspaper," as he called it and certainly believed it to be. Colonel McCormick—he earned his commission and hence his military title in World War I—was, at 6'7," a large man with obsessions to match. He was one of those rich boys—a McCormick of the reaper McCormicks—who became even richer through daring, industry, and acumen. And he was an Ahab with more than one white whale: among the Colonel's nemeses were the British empire, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and everything to do with the New Deal. Colonel McCormick was more than a bit of a nut, but—this needs to be added—an authentically great nut, extravagant in every way and, in his lifetime, a figure about whom no one could be neutral.

When I was a boy growing up in Chicago during World War II, the *Chicago Tribune* was not permitted in our house. As apolitical as my father was, he managed to keep a cold spot in his heart for the World's Greatest Newspaper and its publisher. His doing so deprived me of *Dick Tracy*, the *Katzenjammer Kids*, and others of the best comics in the country, which the Colonel had cleverly signed on years before. What some of us have had to suffer for politics!

The reason the *Trib* was not allowed in our house was that, along with Charles Lindbergh, Joseph Kennedy, Frank Lloyd Wright, and other notable Americans of the day, the Colonel was an America Firster and an isolationist. He viewed the war as essentially a British plot, if not an invention, and saw no reason to lose American lives to shore up the English in Europe. That the European Jews were simultaneously and systematically being massacred left him, as they say, nothing daunted.

But the war was just one subject—albeit a huge

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one—among many. The Colonel could work Chicagoans into a frenzy faster than Billy Sunday could bring in souls. So confident were his newspaper's editorials, so happily biased his coverage of events, that people who felt differently about the world would use the *Trib* to start their blood running. My father tells a story about getting a flat tire in a snowstorm. When a *Chicago Tribune* delivery truck pulled up and the driver asked if he could help, my father told him to go straight to hell. The Colonel could have that effect, even on a calm man.

Eventually, after the Colonel died in 1955, my father backed down and began to allow the *Trib* in the house. He did so, I should report, because he needed its classified pages for his own business. For besides the best funny pages, the *Trib* had far and away the best classified section in town; it also had the best sports section, the best foreign coverage, and much else, too. It may not have been the World's Greatest Newspaper, but it was, outside of its general editorial line, a very useful one. The Colonel, for all his zaniness, was a great newspaperman.

THE MEASURE of his greatness, and the quality of his zaniness, have now been taken into lengthy and I believe accurate account by Richard Norton Smith in *The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick*.* Smith's book is rich in detail, impressive in background material, and written with felicitous touches of irony. If the book has a major weakness, it may be that Smith does not really—not finally—penetrate the Colonel's character. Nor is he quite successful in showing this extraordinary man's development. What he does do exceedingly well is to present the Colonel in full feather: a man who came to the office in jodhpurs and accompanied by his favorite (often disagreeable) dogs and who, later in life, flew the 30 or so miles to work from his suburban estate because he could not bear the slowness of automobile traffic.

Robert Rutherford McCormick was born in 1880. Called "Bertie" by his parents, he was a second son, his brother Medill being not only the first-born but easily the favored. His father, a business failure though a very wealthy man, became a second-line diplomat who ended up a first-line dipsomaniac. His mother was a Medill. Her father, the publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, had also served as mayor of Chicago after the city's great fire of 1871. She herself was an exceptional social climber of great earnestness and powerful drive. She also had her disappointments. Kate Medill McCormick lost her second child, a daughter Katrina, before the infant reached her sixth month; and, Richard Norton Smith informs us, "the grieving mother never got over the loss—or forgave her next child [our man Bertie] for being born male."

Bertie was educated in England, a big mistake both for him and, later, for the English. At Ludgrove, his public school, Bertie slept under an American flag and, in reaction to British chauvinism, became a youthful expert on the U.S. Constitution. Although he would later dress in English clothes, play polo, hunt foxes, and in nearly every outward way live most Anglophiliacally, he reserved the right to despise the English.

Returning to this country, Bertie was enrolled in 1894 in Groton. The only member of his class born, as Richard Norton Smith reports, west of the Hudson, he became rather jingoistically Midwestern and finished sixteenth out of nineteen boys. He seemed not much happier at Yale. There, "for the first and last time," Smith writes, he "made a conscious effort to be like everybody else." It did not take. He was not like anyone else, not then or ever; what Groton and Yale principally and finally accomplished was to set him permanently in opposition to all things admired in the Eastern United States.

By the time he completed his formal education, the chief contradictions in Bertie's character were established. He was a bashful narcissist, thumpingly egotistical yet deeply self-doubting. "By turns arrogant and shy, hearty and remote," Smith writes, "McCormick concealed his insecurities behind a gruffly formal exterior." All the wilder, then, to contemplate his running for political office, which he did upon his return to Chicago, actually winning the office of alderman on the Chicago City Council. He was sufficiently successful at the bread-and-butter work of an alderman, which consisted, then as now, of brokering favors for constituents, to be put up by the Republican party—founded by his maternal grandfather Joseph Medill and Stephen Douglas—for president of the Sanitary District. In this job, too, he performed well, cutting into the business-as-usual corruption of a rich Chicago fiefdom with a number of reform measures and even attempting to fight off the depredations of the utilities mogul Samuel Insull.

The young Bertie McCormick's politics were generally those of a conservative reformer. Amusingly, though perhaps not entirely charitably, Smith contends that "he held a libertarian distrust of any system or dogma that interfered with the pursuit of happiness on his terms." In any case, he was not cut out for the public life, at least insofar as it depend-

* Houghton Mifflin, 597 pp., $35.00.

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ed on election to public office. For one thing, he was much more proficient at making enemies than friends; for another, he had the habit of showing up for Chicago City Council meetings in polo togs, not exactly the common touch; for a third, he had never much availed himself of that old politician's friend, cowardly caution. In 1910, he was defeated for reelection.

AT THE *Chicago Tribune*, the line of succession was immensely complex. The heir apparent was to be Bertie's brother Medill, who showed signs of serious mental instability (he was later thought to be a serious manic-depressive). Joseph Patterson, his mother's sister's son, was already well established at the editorial helm of the *Trib*. As Smith shows in careful detail, Bertie did not so much join as insinuate himself into the paper—until, through hard work, he reached the top, a position of absolute dominance. Later, in 1914, he and his cousin Joe would sign what has become known as "The Iron Bound Agreement," in which they pledged loyalty to each other; the agreement lasted through Joseph Patterson's lengthy tenure as the main figure on the *New York Daily News*, which he founded in 1919.

The point to be underscored is that Colonel McCormick took what Smith calls "the paper of record among Chicagoans of high caste" and turned it into a hugely successful modern newspaper. It may not have been your or my father's idea of a good time, but the *Trib*, under the Colonel's masterminding, became an important, vibrant, international newspaper. He achieved this by furious hard work and impressive foresight, applied to all facets of the operation.

One of his great coups, for example, was hiring Max Annenberg (father of Walter); a serious tough guy himself, Annenberg, as head of circulation, was excellent at dealing with thugs who were attempting to sabotage delivery of the *Trib*. The Colonel also supplied readers with lots of special services, including a column devoted to holding public officials to their responsibilities, booklets on how to deflect the rising cost of living, cash prizes for solving mysteries. He acquired much timberland in Canada, useful for paper manufacture. He provided excellent employee benefits: bonuses and pensions, free medical care, lengthy vacations, and a set of silverware for all *Trib* workers who married. "Every member of the *Tribune*," he once said, "is a member of my family."

All this, of course, came at a price. The price was the Colonel's leadership. The old boy was hands-on, with a vengeance. Endlessly he plied his editors with ideas for stories, half of them a little balmy. If you worked for the Colonel, by and large you did the Colonel's bidding. Some editors and foreign correspondents might have helped inform him on one subject or another, but finally it had to be understood that the *Trib* was the bugle through which blew only the opinions of Robert Rutherford McCormick.

These opinions, as garnered by Richard Norton Smith, turn out to have been rather more varied, odd, and idiosyncratic than one might have thought. The *Trib* was anti-Woodrow Wilson; also anti-Henry Ford. The Colonel early predicted that Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience would lead to independence for India. He was against all involvement of the United States in foreign wars after World War I, yet he was for military preparedness. He hated taxation and any sign of the spread of the federal government. He disliked Herbert Hoover ("The man won't do"), and in 1932 attempted to get the Republican party to replace him with Calvin Coolidge as a candidate against FDR. He viewed the Pulitzer Prizes as a "mutual admiration society," and hence not to be taken seriously. He thought architects were insane. Like the rest of us in the great opinion league, on an average day the Colonel batted about .300.

THE PROBLEM is that he so emphatically blew it in the clutch. His Anglophobia blinded him to anything remotely resembling reality in World War II, which he saw, in Smith's words, "as a clash of armies rather than ideologies." In fact, as Smith relates, the Colonel knew better: Sigrid Schultz, his excellent correspondent in Germany, was supplying him with splendidly precise information about the viciousness of Nazism. But McCormick preferred to believe that not Nazism but British imperialism was the real threat. His anti-British feeling, of course, nicely dovetailed with his isolationism, which also took him off the hook on the question of the Jews. When apprised of what was happening under Hitler, he replied, "I feel . . . a very great sense of duty to protect the Jews in this country, but not abroad."

The fact that Franklin Delano Roosevelt represented the pro-war faction in the country really pulled the steel hatch down over the Colonel's views. If FDR had come out for oxygen, McCormick would have ordered an editorial against it. When Alf Landon ran against FDR in 1936, the *Trib* published a cartoon showing the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and Roosevelt.

Colonel McCormick's line on World War II is said to have cost him 100,000 readers, the *Tribune*'s circulation dropping further when Marshall Field began a rival newspaper, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, after

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the war. But my guess is that McCormick did not care all that much. Not only did he still have all the ads, he really was a man of principle, albeit too often the wrong one.

As he got older, McCormick only got dopier. He supported Senator Joseph McCarthy all the way. Naturally, he backed General Douglas MacArthur over Truman in Korea. He came to believe in the notion of a secret cabal running the United States government and answerable to Felix Frankfurter. Far from abating, his Anglophobia led him to the belief that Rhodes scholars returned to America to form a fifth column. Nor did his distaste for the Eastern United States cool; in *The Second City*, his book on Chicago, A.J. Liebling remarks that for the Colonel, the British empire "begins at the Hudson River."

The Colonel died, of a weakened heart and a shot liver, in 1955 at the age of seventy-five, a wild old boy but absolutely his own man right up to the end. He was buried in an oversized coffin.

LATE IN his lengthy biography, Richard Norton Smith writes that "the tragedy of Franklin Roosevelt was that he died too soon; the tragedy of Robert McCormick was that he lived too long." Wrong-headed, outrageous, megalomaniacal: why, then, does the Colonel, with a wedge of time placed between his day and ours, seem in many ways an oddly admirable figure? According to Smith, "McCormick was the last publisher to pursue duty at the sacrifice of profit." John Bartlow Martin, a fine journalist of the day and a liberal, said of him, "He knows what he believes and is willing to go to hell for it." And Katharine Graham, for many years the publisher of the *Washington Post*, is quoted in *The Colonel* as saying that "with all his strangeness, [McCormick] really did have integrity and professionalism of his own kind."

Mrs. Graham herself has had a very good press in our day as something close to the apotheosis of the modern newspaper publisher. Her fame is traceable in large part to the *Post*'s relentless exposé of the 1974 break-in at Democratic headquarters at the Watergate, an event which in the fullness of time led triumphantly to the resignation of Richard Nixon as President of the United States. Her reputation for "integrity and professionalism" has gotten an even bigger boost from her recent memoirs, *Personal History*,* which have won near-universal acclaim from the reviewers, some of it bordering on the ecstatic. Yet as these memoirs make plain, the contrast between Mrs. Graham and Colonel McCormick could not be starker.

Not that one gross similarity—namely, inherited wealth—is lacking. An earlier biography of Colonel McCormick bore the title *Poor Little Rich Boy*; with the appropriate change of gender, the sobriquet fits Mrs. Graham even more snugly. It is an old story, the one she tells. Her father, Eugene Meyer, was one of those young men who had the very sensible notion of accumulating $60 million or so before reaching the age of forty. Her mother, Agnes Ernst Meyer, was a woman with artistic interests, political and social ambitions, and the instincts of an intellectual lion-hunter (at the level of John Dewey, Constantin Brancusi, Albert Einstein, and Thomas Mann). But, as Mrs. Graham makes her case, she herself was greatly shorted as a child in the supply of mother-love.

Her father was Jewish, her mother not. Judaism—or Jewishness, for that matter—had little to do with her upbringing (or with the way she would raise her own children). Being Jewish loomed only as a social fact, in the guise of that miserable hag, Auntie Semitism, a disease of which her mother, who was born a Lutheran, may even have been a carrier. But in any event Jewishness, like sex and money, was not a subject of discussion in the Meyer household.

The family moved to Washington when Katharine was four years old. Her father, high- and civic-minded, was given serious appointments and assignments by seven different U.S. Presidents. Despite her mother's coldness, she felt closer to her mother than to her father, whose considerable dignity brought a natural distancing (though she later reports sensing his support in her own efforts to have a career). Her entire childhood, she claims, was one in which she could never feel confident about herself or anything she did.

KATHARINE MEYER began college at Vassar, then transferred to the University of Chicago, lured by the excitement of Robert Maynard Hutchins and his Great Books program. There she got a taste of youthful 30's radicalism, though she never joined the Communist party. Her father, who had bought the *Washington Post* in 1933, next arranged a job for her as a reporter on the *San Francisco News*; after that, she wrote editorials on lightish subjects for the *Post*. Then in Washington she met a young Harvard Law School graduate, a protégé of Felix Frankfurter named Philip Graham, whom, in 1940, she married; the service was conducted by "a very nice, low-key Lutheran min-

* Knopf, 642 pp., $29.95.

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ister" and photographed by Edward Steichen. Her social circle as a young wife included Joseph Alsop, David Bruce, Joseph Rauh, Jessica Mitford, and Jean Monnet: a fairly fast track.

To hear her tell it, though, in the perennially bright weather of the young, the rich, and the clever, she always felt herself slower than the rest of the field. Her husband in particular made her feel backward, and socially inept. "Gradually," she writes, "I became the drudge . . . and I became increasingly unsure of myself." And: "I was growing shyer and less confident as I grew older."

Philip Graham was a classical self-starter. His father-in-law felt so confident of Philip's abilities that he put him in charge of the *Washington Post* in his early thirties. He had little trouble making decisions, and he made many brilliant ones that would later pay off handsomely for the corporation, including buying television stations early in the game and acquiring *Newsweek*. Although the *Post*'s official policy was not to endorse presidential candidates, Phil Graham was in the inner circle of Democratic-party politics. He is said to have been the man who pushed Senator Estes Kefauver to get the investigations of organized crime under way. Unfitting as it may seem for a publisher to do so, he wrote speeches during the Kennedy administration for the President and the Attorney General, as well as for Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson.

He was the love of Katharine Graham's life and its central tragedy. The tragedy was that Phil Graham was insane, apparently a manic-depressive, though never diagnosed as such till late in the day—wildly insulting on the one end, unable to get up from his bed on the other. Heavy boozing was part of his illness. At one point, he was prepared to leave his wife for a much younger woman, an Australian journalist. (Later Mrs. Graham would discover that there had been other women, too.) During an attempt at reconciliation, in 1963, he shot himself to death in one of the bathrooms of their country house.

Only with Philip Graham's death did Mrs. Graham become, including in her own estimation, a figure of significance. Pushing away outside offers to buy the *Post*, she took over as president of the company; eventually, she would serve as publisher, chief executive officer, and chairman. In her own account, hers was a story of education, of learning how to run a newspaper, a powerful corporation, a life lived in the glare of publicity.

Personal History is thus a fairly accurate title for Mrs. Graham's memoir, for it is in some ways less about the institution of the *Washington Post* than about the psychological development of the woman who came to run it and help make it an enormous commercial success. Yet it is also a curiously blind book. Although Katharine Graham was the beneficiary of a generous inheritance, on the evidence of these more than 600 pages she did not, I fear, inherit a terribly interesting mind. What she does exhibit is a representative mind; her book provides a useful portrait of a contemporary American type in what I suppose academics of another time will call the age of liberal intellectual hegemony.

One quality that marks Mrs. Graham as a product of liberal culture is her language, which frequently—usually at crucial points—lapses into a modified psychobabble. Attempting to account in her last pages for why she has not remarried, she notes that "I enjoy being around married people who really love each other, are constantly polite and caring about each other, and between whom you feel a real and supportive relationship." The *Post*'s role in defying the government and (together with the *New York Times*) publishing the Pentagon Papers during the Vietnam war is characterized as "another extraordinary learning experience for me." Returning to life outside the Washington Post Company, she writes: "Perhaps with lessons learned from the women's movement, I began to have a happier time in my private life."

Another sign of conformity to the approved spirit of the day lies in Mrs. Graham's insistence on her own victimhood. For this multimillionaire's daughter and head of a Fortune-500 company, a woman once listed by *U.S. News & World Report* as the seventeenth most powerful person in the United States, what counts most is that she was not sufficiently encouraged by her parents and was then further suppressed by a brilliant, ebullient husband, with the patriarchal *ancien régime* left to finish the job.

Is it necessary to note, for the record, that Katharine Graham is hardly the pussycat she suggests she is or was? Just as she uses this book to establish her own virtue, so she uses it to settle a number of old scores with anyone who she feels has condescended to her, betrayed her, or in any serious way let her down. Despite all her talk of bad nerves and shaken confidence, she is one tough character.

The final mark of Mrs. Graham's conformism lies in her politics, which are best described as soft liberal, and, more important, in the way her politics were or were not reflected in the paper. Philip Graham had not been above using the *Post* to further his own views; this he did by suppressing certain stories, playing others in klieg lights. But Mrs. Graham,

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once in power, saw her function much differently. Although she seems to have had no difficulty thinking of herself as the boss in a business sense, as the publisher she says she tended to regard her role less as an opinion-setter than as a person in the middle, "the go-between between complainers, supplicants, and others of all kinds on the one hand and editors at the *Post* or *Newsweek* on the other. The editors," she adds, "are more often right than wrong. . . . "

Depends, I should say, on who the editors happen to be. Mrs. Graham's first important move was to appoint Ben Bradlee as editor of the *Post*. Though Bradlee's chief ambition was to edit a paper that had prestige equal to that of the *New York Times*, it was also Ben Bradlee who brought on Philip Geyelin to run the *Post*'s editorial page, and it was Geyelin who turned the paper around on Vietnam, transforming it from an institution generally supporting administration policy to one sharply critical or antagonistic. This prompted President Lyndon Johnson, who had been a favorite of Phil Graham's, to exclaim in exasperation: "Well, by God, if I owned a goddamn newspaper, I ought to have some people around me who are going to do what I want."

But, as Katharine Graham tells it, Johnson missed the point:

> What the President never accepted, or even clearly understood—as most people don't understand—is the autonomy editors have, and must have, to produce a good newspaper. I used to describe it as liberty, not license.

Later, during Watergate, Mrs. Graham would write to Richard Nixon's staff assistant, John Ehrlichman: "What appears in the *Post* is not a reflection of my personal feelings."

Can this be true? It both is and is not. Take Watergate. "Watergate no doubt was the most important occurrence in my working life," Mrs. Graham writes, "but my involvement was basically peripheral, rarely direct." She says she was in "constant conversation" with Ben Bradlee and Howard Simons, the editors in charge of the *Post*'s news coverage, as well as with Philip Geyelin and Meg Greenfield, the two main editorial writers on the subject. But she also kept her distance, and even now she claims not to know the identity of "Deep Throat," the paper's chief informant. She summarizes her role thus: "What I did primarily was stand behind the editors and reporters, in whom I believed."

Another way of putting this is to say that she chose not to call off the dogs.

THE OLD story about newspapers used to be that publishers ruled them with an iron hand in an iron glove. They, the publishers, were the true molders of opinion. The editors and reporters were their mere minions, anticipating and carrying out their ideas and orders, boozing it up afterward.

Something of the sort could be said of Colonel McCormick. Lots of interesting men worked for the *Chicago Tribune*—Charlie MacArthur, Ring Lardner, Vincent Sheehan, William L. Shirer. They were not the Colonel's minions, but neither did they seem ever to have laid a glove on him in the realm of influence. McCormick fired Vincent Sheehan, pronouncing him "a liar, disloyal and dishonorable." When he hired Shirer to head his Vienna bureau, he instructed him: "Don't fall for all these Communists and socialists. And don't let all the counts and countesses take you in." Eventually, he fired him, too.

Katharine Graham, by contrast, seems to have been everywhere subject to influence. All the strong stands she took, she seems to have been led to, willingly enough, under the guidance of others. Mrs. Graham may thus be a perfect illustration of H. L. Mencken's notion that publishers do not educate their editors and reporters, but rather are educated by them. For where else are publishers likely to get their ideas, Mencken asked, if not from reading their own newspapers? True enough, but considering the case of Katharine Graham, one might add that there are, surely, better places to go to school.

But is there really all that much to choose between a publisher like Colonel McCormick, a man of odd courage and great flair who, led by his obsessions, proved wrong half the time, and mostly on the critical issues; and a publisher like Mrs. Graham, educated by and finally in thrall to employees whose own morality, in the end, was not much more subtle than the Colonel's ("Goddamn Roosevelt" in his case, "Goddamn Nixon" in theirs)? Jefferson famously said that, "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." What is there about the present time that tends to make one wonder, if only for a brief moment, whether we would not be better off without either?

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OBSERVATIONS

What Adams Saw Over Jefferson's Wall

Richard A. Samuelson

AMERICA IS in the midst of a war between the religious and the secular: so declared the right-wing presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan in 1992. In 1994, the liberal historian Alan Brinkley agreed. "Much of the history of the postwar United States," Brinkley wrote in the *American Historical Review*,

> has been the story of two intersecting developments. One is the survival of fundamentalist private values among people who have in other ways adapted themselves to the modern public world. The second is the unprecedentedly vigorous assault on those values by liberal, secular Americans.

Actually, however, today's "culture war" is as old as the Republic, and has waxed and waned ever since a temporary alliance forged between deists and more traditional Christians in the American Revolution broke down in the Revolution's immediate aftermath. From the beginning, that war has centered on a bitter feud between the intellectual children of the Enlightenment and the forces of conventional religion. But it has also, more interestingly, featured a more rarefied debate within and among the Enlighteners themselves—a debate over the nature of man, of truth, and of progress.

James D. Hunter, the leading scholar of today's culture war, hints at this debate when he remarks that in a certain sense "the relevant divisions in the American context are no longer defined according to where one stands vis-à-vis Jesus, Luther, or Calvin, but where one stands vis-à-vis Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, and Condorcet." In the 18th century, America's *philosophes* were themselves torn along precisely that line. Some, like the French thinkers named by Hunter, clung to a radical desire to transform society root and branch. Others, however, held to a more moderate outlook, and sought less sweeping reforms. Within this debate, the place of religion was a central battleground.

The family feud within the American Enlightenment can be seen in high relief in the writings of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, two Presidents who in retirement disagreed so thoroughly that an exasperated Adams wrote, "You and I ought not to die, before we have explained ourselves to each other." In this, at least, if in little else, Jefferson concurred.

Both men were Unitarians, but in matters religious shared little more than that label. Jefferson's brand of Unitarianism did not differ much from deism. In his scheme, God was the creator of the universe, of man, and of morality; but the idea that God was an active presence in the world he dismissed as mere superstition. As for Jesus, although he was the greatest moral teacher, he was not divine, nor was he the anointed servant of the divine. Not surprisingly, the adult Jefferson never uttered a word in prayer.

Like many other Enlightenment thinkers, Jefferson saw the sum total of man's religious past as one long line of crusades and persecutions piling abuse upon abuse and spewing rivers of blood. The only way to

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end such violence, he concluded, was to bring religion into line with reason, as he himself had done. Supposing "belief to be the assent of the mind to an intelligible proposition," he regarded those who based their beliefs on a faith or a sacred text as relics of a less enlightened time, and he simply refused to accord those beliefs any respect. "It is too late in the day," he scoffed at Trinitarians, "for men to sincerely pretend they believe in Platonic mysticisms that three are one, and one is three."

Jefferson's religious progressivism shared something else with the French Enlightenment: virulent anti-Judaism. To Jefferson, ancient Israel constituted a nasty sect, which

> had presented for the object of their worship a being of terrific character, cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust. . . .
>
> Moses had bound the Jews to many idle ceremonies, mummeries and observances, of no effect towards producing the social utilities which constitute the essence of virtue . . . [and] instilled into his people the most anti-social spirit towards other nations. . . . [Jesus had to contend with] the priests of the superstition, a bloodthirsty race, as cruel and remorseless as the being whom they represented as the family God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, and the local God of Israel. They were constantly laying snares, too, to entangle him in the web of the law.

Though in principle a proponent of tolerance, Jefferson was thus hardly free of bigotry. Faith, especially orthodox faith, had no place in his world. How could it, indeed? Arguing by syllogism, Jefferson postulated that if God had given man a moral sense and sufficient reason to understand His will, and if men turned instead to sacred texts and traditions, then they were suffering from what in a later age would be called false consciousness. The blame lay in the power wielded over men's minds by religious establishments, and the answer lay in disestablishment.

Hence Jefferson's famous "wall of separation." In an officially godless state, issues of belief would be uncoerced. Good religion would drive out bad religion—"I trust," Jefferson wrote enthusiastically, "there is not a *young man* now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian"—and peace would ensue as man's naturally harmonious and benevolent passions ceased to be corrupted for violent ends.

JOHN ADAMS's Unitarianism was of a markedly different stripe. Adams came to Unitarianism from Calvinism. Rejecting the latter's doctrines of predestination and salvation of the elect, he concluded instead that God granted free will and would save or damn each individual according to the merits of his deeds on earth. In other words, Adams became a Unitarian because he found the idea of original sin irreconcilable with the idea of moral freedom.

Adams's disagreement with Jefferson centered on their respective conceptions of human nature. Where Jefferson placed his hopes in a future free of religious fanaticism, Adams thought this was a utopian pipe dream. Science, both natural and political, could advance, and so could human knowledge and understanding, thus making the world more livable; but moral progress was something else again. "Human Reason, and human Conscience," he lectured his friend, "though I believe that there are such things, are not a Match, for human Passions, human Imaginations and human Enthusiasm."

Adams believed in, for want of a better term, the sufficiency of human nature. God endowed man with certain attributes that could not be changed, but were good or bad depending upon the ends to which they were put. Looking to the past, he saw an unending story not only of religious wars—Adams was second to none in his disgust at the abuses performed in the name of religion—but of genuine piety and faith. Since the religious impulse was inherent in man, trying to uproot it was misguided on two counts: it could not be done without gross tyranny, and it would wreck something with much potential good in it. Nor was fanaticism itself to be dismissed altogether. Adams's Puritan ancestors had been religious zealots, but

> far from being a reproach to them, [it] was greatly to their honor: for I believe it will be found universally true, that no great enterprise, for the honor and happiness of mankind, was ever achieved, without a large mixture of that noble infirmity.

Significantly, Adams also appreciated Judaism in a way precluded by Jefferson's zealous desire to crush infamy. The leading general of Alexander the Great, he reminded Jefferson, "was so impressed with what he learned in Judea, that he employed 70 learned Men to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, nearly 300 years before Christ." In a striking passage written to his friend F. A. Vanderkemp, Adams declared:

> . . . in spite of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believed or pretended to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and to propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization.

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Conventionally portrayed as something of a curmudgeon and misanthrope, Adams was actually more tolerant than Jefferson. Precisely because he did not expect to be able to remake religion, he held it in a more sympathetic regard. But there was more to it than that. Unlike Jefferson, who believed that in practice God's will was relatively simple to grasp, once one liberated the moral sense from the shackles of faith, Adams stressed the inscrutability of God's ways. For him, the most important lesson to be gleaned—*from reason*—was that "there is [not] now, never will be, and never was but one being who can Understand the Universe. And that it is not only vain but wicked for insects to pretend to comprehend it." Thinking God's will unfathomable, but convinced as well that man desired nothing so much as to know the ultimate truths, Adams sympathized with the varied human attempts to understand the deity, and searched for the good in all of them.

Finally, when it came to church-state relations, Adams, building on the expectation that religion would remain in the future what it had been in the past, sought a creative balance of power. "Checks and Balances, Jefferson, however you and your Party may have ridiculed them," he wrote to his Virginia friend,

> are our only Security, for the progress of Mind, as well as the Security of Body. Every Species of these Christians would persecute Deists, as soon as either sect would persecute another, if it had unchecked and unbalanced Power. Nay, the Deists would persecute Christians, *and the Atheists would persecute Deists* [emphasis added], with as unrelenting Cruelty, as any Christians would persecute them or one another. Know thyself, human Nature!

Though a strong disestablishmentarian, Adams did not invest millennial hopes in disestablishment. Whereas Jefferson hated establishments because in the past they had led to religious wars, Adams hated them because they were *prima facie* immoral, forcing one man to contribute to the support of another man's religion. But he did not think disestablishment would end religious strife.

On the contrary, the attempt to separate religious discourse from public life seemed to Adams nothing but a stalking horse for a new orthodoxy, no less absurd than that of the sternest Bible-thumping Calvinist. If Jefferson's brand of intolerance and anti-religious bigotry had its way, it would surely provoke an equal and opposite reaction, destroying civic peace. *Real* civic peace, Adams thought, would emerge only when deists and atheists could have it out publicly with religionists, not when the latter were made to sit quietly in their churches and stay out of the public square.

WHILE THE argument between Adams and Jefferson has been around since the nation's founding, our age features a particularly intense version of it. This is the result of two long-term trends, of which the first is the secularization of the American intelligentsia. According to a recent report by James D. Hunter and Carl Bowman, America's

> social elites are the most negative of all social groups toward words like "traditional," "conservative," and "Christian." Moreover, they are the most positive of all social groups toward terms like "ethnic diversity," "multiculturalism," "tolerance," and "empowerment." . . . Social elites are the least likely to say they believe in God.

This represents a real change from the time when America's cultural and social elites, whether or not they attended church, freely and openly had recourse to a religious perspective in apprehending and interpreting reality.

The second trend is the growth of the American state. In an earlier era of limited federal government and a restrictive understanding of the Bill of Rights, states and localities offered wiggle-room in which politics could more easily accommodate belief. As government has expanded and federal courts have drawn an ever stricter separation between church and state, we have made it increasingly more difficult for orthodox believers and those who side with them on moral questions to put their opinions into law in any manner short of a constitutional amendment. In response, orthodox believers have become increasingly angry and resentful, and have either withdrawn into a parallel culture of their own or declared "war" on the social and legal system erected by America's secular elite.

COULD IT be that Jefferson's aggressive prescription for church-state relations, the prescription we follow today, has led us down a blind alley? In the age of the centralized megastate, the wall of separation has indeed become what Jefferson intended it to be—a means of favoring a certain set of values at the expense of others. But just as Adams predicted, this has threatened civil peace. What if Adams was right in contending that the notion of religious consensus was a dangerous fantasy, and that as long as people continued to believe, religious opinion would and, more importantly, should play an important role in public debate?

It is, in short, past time for us to recall that our founding fathers were not all of a single mind on the issue of church-state relations, and that, even among the Enlightened, wisdom on the matter did not reside in one quarter alone. To the contrary, on this question as on others, the greater part of wisdom is undoubtedly to be found among those who wished to make a virtue of necessity by designing a system that would seek to accommodate eternal conflicts, rather than, once and for all, to win them.

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An American Tragedy

Carol Iannone

In an interview about his film *Damage* (1992), the late French director Louis Malle observed that when he began his career some decades ago, "it seemed like you had to really shake up the conventions of the society we lived in and come up with, you know, this need to liberate." But, he continued, "now it seems like this has been done and now we are almost trying to pick up the pieces in a way."

Malle knew whereof he spoke. A number of his earlier films, particularly *Murmur of the Heart* (1971), a genial story of mother-son incest in modern upper-class France, and *Pretty Baby* (1978), a lush portrayal of child prostitution in a New Orleans brothel at the turn of the century, were indeed documents of the "need to liberate." By contrast, *Damage* is the painful story of a handsome middle-aged doctor who has everything—wealth, a burgeoning career, a beautiful wife, and two fine children—and destroys it all in an affair with his son's fiancée.

Something of a similar pentimental pattern can be traced in the career of the American novelist Philip Roth, who was born in 1933, just one year after Malle. If Malle had his *Pretty Baby*, Roth had *Portnoy's Complaint* (1967), whose main character obsessively rehearses the details, from the onanistic to the orgiastic, of his frenetic sex life. A compulsive interest in "shaking up the conventions" (Malle) or "break[ing] free from the accustomed constraints" (Roth) has been, indeed, a constant theme of this novelist's work. But now in his newest book, *American Pastoral*,* Roth presents a second look, sobering and even shattering, at the forces of "liberation" that radically changed American life in the decade of the 60's and thereafter.

Whether intentionally or not, the title of Roth's new novel inevitably conjures up other famous books that have had America on their minds (not including Roth's own facetious *The Great American Novel*). To many a literary imagination, America represented from its inception a New World Eden where the American Adam faced boundless possibility and infinite, open-ended opportunity. But alongside this idea, which achieved a kind of literary-philosophical apotheosis in the essays of Emerson, there was also a sobering, tragic strain, inspired perhaps by the Calvinist preoccupation with the first garden of Eden and its human consequences, and embodied outstandingly in the great 19th-century novelists Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne. In our own century, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* (1965), Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), despite their manifest differences, have all been in this darker grain, and all deal, not coincidentally, with murder. Now, in Roth's *American Pastoral*, the grain has darkened still further: the fruits of murder involve no less than the end of the American Dream itself, destroyed, even as it comes most fully to fruition, by its own offspring.

Actually, Roth began reexamining the ethos of liberation quite some time ago, particularly in *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), and *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983): these three novels, plus an additional novella, *The Prague Orgy*, were collected in a single volume, *Zuckerman Bound*, in 1985. Nathan Zuckerman is Roth's literary alter ego; the novels in which he figures offer a kind of parallel universe by means of which Roth examines his own life, his career, his Jewishness, the promise of America, the nature of art, and the taboo-breaking kind of fiction he became famous for.

In the new novel, Zuckerman, who like Roth is the author of a scandalously successful work which has made him notorious, returns to Newark in 1995 for his 45th high-school reunion. There he comes upon a story, in some ways like his own and in some ways the opposite: a near-epic saga of the dissolution of the old life, the old America, the old Jews. This time, however, the story is told not from the point of view of Zuckerman himself, supercerebral verbal craftsman, but of a solid, ordinary, decent man who lived his life "right in the American grain" and never even asked "why

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* Houghton Mifflin, 423 pp., $26.00.

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are things the way they are" because they were always so perfect.

The story Zuckerman hears at his reunion concerns his legendary boyhood hero, Seymour "Swede" Levov, who graduated from the same high school in 1945, five years ahead of Zuckerman's own class. Levov's nickname derived from his stunning, Nordic blondness, as close to Gentile as a Jew could look. An all-around athlete who after graduation enlisted in the Marines, the Swede, on his return from the service, turned down the chance to play professional ball. Instead, after college, he entered the leathergoods business that had been started by his immigrant grandfather.

Although he enters the business partly to please his father, the Swede turns out to be very good at his work, learning it from the bottom up, loving the tangible and beautiful product—fine ladies' gloves—that emerges from this exacting industry. He prospers mightily, marrying a beautiful Irish-American girl named Dawn Dwyer, a former Miss New Jersey, and moving out of Newark deep into the rural, old-money countryside. Swede's bossy but fiercely devoted father Lou, one of "those pioneering Jewish fathers bursting with taboos," objects both to the mixed marriage and to the move to exurbia, but the Swede places his hopes in the new age of assimilation even as in every other way he continues to remain the perfect, obedient, Jewish son.

In Old Rimrock, the Levovs refurbish a 170-year-old house and have a child, Merry, a lovely little girl who adores her father and cheerfully helps her mother raise a small herd of cattle. Though eventually Merry starts to stutter, a development which causes much pain to her and her parents, this little serpent is the only sign of trouble in their Eden.

But "then everything changes," and tragedy strikes—the worst kind of tragedy, "the tragedy of a man not set up for tragedy." Before her upbringing can be completed, Merry is overtaken by the 60's. She finds friends among a radical clique near Columbia University in New York, grows fat and angry, begins to hate LBJ and his war and to denounce her country and her class, stuttering madly all the while. When her parents prevail upon her to stop her trips into New York, she becomes the radical scourge of Morristown High—"Ho Chi Levov," they call her—and soon, horrifyingly, sets a bomb in the Old Rimrock post office, killing a much-respected local doctor. She goes underground and flees, only, we discover later, to kill three more people in a bombing on the West Coast. Her mother is nearly destroyed. At this very moment, Newark begins to burn in race riots, and the Swede's business, already a victim of changing women's fashions, stands on the verge of collapse. His American Pastoral has come to an end.

THIS MUCH of the story Zuckerman hears, at the reunion, from the Swede's younger brother, Jerry. It emerges that the Swede himself has been in touch with Zuckerman separately, on another matter, but in his characteristically quiet way, has not spoken of his own heartbreak. By now, in any case, he has died of cancer, so Zuckerman must take what he learns from Jerry and flesh out, by means of his own imagination, the story of this man "whose discontents were barely known to himself, awakening in middle age to the horror of self-reflection." Roth's artistry is such that we are soon totally convinced we are indeed getting the "real" story.

In his manly way (as Zuckerman reconstructs it), the Swede tries to see where his own responsibility lies for what has happened to his much-loved daughter, gleaning partial truths from different sources, only to be forced again and again to confront the blazing chaotic irrationality of it all. What he cannot understand, at least at first, is her hatred of America:

> How could she "hate" this country when she had no *conception* of this country? How could a child of his be so blind as to revile the "rotten system" that had given her own family every opportunity to succeed? To revile her "capitalist" parents as though their wealth were the product of anything other than the unstinting industry of three generations. . . . There wasn't much difference, *and she knew it*, between hating America and hating them.

Ultimately, the Swede begins to grasp that America is the spoiled Merry's stand-in not only for the hard reality of her own family and its experience but for the inherent, flawed limitedness of the human condition, "for everything that was imperfect in life." And in his agony the Swede also begins to apprehend something else: that behind the righteous indignation and "idealism" of the radical movement that snatched away his daughter lies a kind of counter-truth to decency—namely, the sheer, malicious joy of violent wasting:

> He heard them laughing, the Weathermen, the [Black] Panthers, the angry ragtag army of the violent Uncorrupted who called him a criminal and hated his guts because he was one of those who own and have. *The Swede finally found out!* They were delirious with joy, delighted at having destroyed his once-pampered daughter and ruined his privileged life, shepherding him at long last to their truth. . . . Welcome aboard, capitalist dog! Welcome to the fucked-over-by-America human race!

WHAT, THEN, has happened to interrupt the seamless unfolding of the American idyll, to bring about this horrid disruption between one generation and the next, the dissolution of "families full of tolerance

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and kindly, well-intentioned liberal goodwill"? A full year before her disappearance, Merry kept a poster in her room that bore the Weatherman motto: "We are against everything that is good and decent in America. We will loot and burn and destroy. We are the incubation of your mother's nightmares." And what had been the Swede's response to this display?

> [B]ecause even though he hadn't liked it one bit he did not believe it was his right blah-blah blah-blah blah, because—out of regard for her property and her personal freedom—he couldn't even pull down an awful poster, because he was not capable of even that much righteous violence, now the hideous realization of the nightmare had come along to test even further the limits of his enlightened tolerance.

The answer hinted at here is reminiscent of that given in an earlier American tragedy, *Moby-Dick*, in which First Mate Starbuck, representing the enlightened, procedural liberalism of another day, confronts the malignant virulence of hatred and rage embodied in Captain Ahab. Now, in *American Pastoral*, "the nice gentle man with his mild way of dealing with conflict and contradiction," as Jerry Levov describes it, "the confident ex-athlete sensible and resourceful in any struggle with an adversary who is fair, comes up against the adversary who is not fair—the evil ineradicable from human dealings."

But niceness and gentleness are not the only qualities at bay in the world of *American Pastoral*. So are decency and honor, as often represented in this novel by the Swede's father, Lou Levov (it turns out that Zuckerman writes his story, too, as the Swede had requested at their meeting before his death). Lou's instinctive respect for religion, his reflexive understanding of the difference between right and wrong, even his authoritarian forcefulness are shown to be generational attributes that may have held for a while, but that could not be passed on without a structure, a system of belief, to sustain them; neither could they be enforced through the power of character alone. Mulling over his father's worry about a Jew deciding to put down roots in Waspish Old Rimrock, a younger Swede had thought to himself:

> Our parents are not attuned to the possibilities, to the realities of the postwar world, where people can live in harmony, all sorts of people side by side no matter what their origins. This is a new generation and there is no need for that resentment stuff from anybody, them *or* us.

But then, later on, the Swede recalls this moment, and also his father's objections to his marrying Dawn, with whom he had been so in love:

> "In love" [his father had expostulated], what does that mean? What is "in love" going to do for you when you have a child? How are you going to raise a child? As a Catholic? As a Jew? No, you are going to raise a child who won't be one thing or the other.

"His father was right," thinks the Swede ruefully now, bereft as he himself is of the particularities by which truth, belief, and knowledge of the difference between right and wrong are transmitted. Without these, he and his wife have indeed raised a child who is neither "one thing or the other," who is (he thinks to himself) "first a stutterer, then a killer." Without these, the American idea—tolerance, openness, opportunity, self-creation—is insufficient even to sustain itself.

BUT THE story is not over. Some years later, during the Watergate-beleaguered Nixon administration, Merry finally returns east. Her father finds her, living in a filthy hole in a burned-out section of Newark. Far from still embracing violence, she has become a Jain, denouncing every pleasure of the flesh, espousing a pacifism so complete she will hardly eat and has consequently grown skeletally thin.

Helpless to restore her, the Swede goes from the terminal anguish of their meeting to a large at-home family dinner planned long before. In a stunningly composed episode that ends the novel, the education of this battered, baffled father is completed. At the party, he learns of his wife's ongoing infidelity with their neighbor, an old-line Wasp present for the evening in the company of his alcoholic wife. Also present is a woman with whom the Swede himself had a brief fling in the awful shattered aftermath of the bombing. She had been Merry's speech therapist, and now the Swede discovers to his horror that it was she who had secretly harbored Merry in the weeks after the bombing when the girl might still have been stopped before doing worse.

The guests, ostensibly, are talking about the first pornographic film in American history to achieve mainstream fame, but

> boiling away beneath the surface talk of *Deep Throat* was the far more disgusting and transgressive subject of . . . wantonness and betrayal and deception, of treachery and disunity among neighbors and friends, the subject of cruelty.

The 60's, in brief, are not just about the bomber young and their war with "Amerika"; the 60's, "the indigenous American berserk," have entered the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, touching everything and everyone with their "mockery of human integrity, every ethical obligation destroyed."

TODAY, THE age of creative transgression is past; in Louis Malle's phrase, we are trying to pick up the pieces. To be sure, life goes on; in the pages of *American Pastoral*, the Swede even remarries and has a new

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family. But after his look into the heart of darkness, nothing can ever be the same. And with America, too, as Roth's scathing and mournful (if at points overwritten) book serves to remind us, life goes on, in some ways even more richly materialistic than before and even more astonishingly naive, puffed up as it now is with "multicultural" pretensions. But beneath the newly laid surface are the patched-over cracks which occasionally yawn open—when, for example, a sports hero gets away with a double murder, or a newborn baby delivered at a high-school prom in New Jersey is found discarded in a trash can.

MUSIC

No More Great Composers?

Terry Teachout

MOST NEWSPAPER critics are forgotten as soon as they retire—unless they happen to write a book. Take Harold C. Schonberg, who served as chief music critic of the *New York Times* from 1960 to 1980 and was for many years one of the most powerful and controversial figures in the world of classical music. Few now recall such marks of Schonberg's tenure as his quixotic advocacy of obscure 19th-century pianist-composers like Adolph Henselt, or the often jesting tone of his reviews (about Leonard Bernstein's flamboyant conducting he once wrote that "Bernstein rose vertically, *à la* Nijinsky, and hovered there a good fifteen seconds by the clock"). Instead, what people remember about the now eighty-two-year-old Schonberg are his still-popular books on music.

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One of these books, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (1970),* has just been reissued in a revised and expanded third edition, and to encounter it again is to understand why it has been so enduring a success. *The Lives of the Great Composers* is a highly readable introduction to the key figures of classical music, packed with choice anecdotes and written in a brisk, unpretentious style that reflects Schonberg's long service as a working newspaperman. But *The Lives of the Great Composers* is more than just a deservedly popular survey history of classical music. It is also an important document in the history of American musical taste.

Throughout his tenure at the *Times*, Harold Schonberg was widely seen as the number-one journalistic enemy of modern music. The first edition of *The Lives of the Great Composers* left no doubt, indeed, that its author took a dim view of much if not most of the music of his own time. Only two 20th-century composers, Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky, received chapters to themselves, and Schonberg's opinion of the latter was conspicuously unenthusiastic ("His music has always commanded more respect than love"). Though he commented favorably on other 20th-century composers—most notably Paul Hindemith, Francis Poulenc, Sergei Prokofiev, and Ralph Vaughan Williams—these, though modernists, were essentially conservative in their musical views and believed above all in the continuing validity of functional tonality as a means of musical expression. As for serialism, a method of composition based on a particular ordering of the twelve tones of the scale pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg and his fol-

* Norton, 653 pp., $35.00.

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lowers, it was damned with faint praise, while the post-World War II avant-garde received even shorter shrift as "a hiatus in the mighty line of powerful, individualistic composers that had extended from Johann Sebastian Bach."

By 1981, when Schonberg brought out a revised edition of *The Lives of the Great Composers*, the face of classical music had already begun to change. In this second edition he noted with approval the emergence of a "new eclecticism" in music. Its proponents, who included George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, George Rochberg, Frederic Rzewski, and David Del Tredici, contended (in Schonberg's summary) that modernism had gone too far, and that "communication between composer and audience had to be reestablished." But Schonberg's interest in the music of these composers was limited (revealingly, he misspelled the names of Rzewski and Del Tredici), and his conclusion remained as it had been in 1970: the "mighty line" of geniuses who had shaped and directed classical music throughout its history had come to an end early in the 20th century, and showed no signs of revival.

That so unabashedly backward-looking a figure should have been in charge of the musical coverage of the most influential newspaper in the United States was regarded by many American composers of the 60's and 70's as little short of scandalous. But Samuel Lipman, writing in COMMENTARY in 1980 as Schonberg stepped down from the *Times*, saw things differently, recognizing that Schonberg's failure to be engaged by modern music was merely a symptom of a larger cultural disorder:

> [Schonberg] reflects rather than influences the musical orientation of the contemporary audience. And that orientation is to music's past rather than its present or future . . . today's musical public has come to a fundamental decision: it has the music it wants, and it is satisfied with what it has.*

SEVENTEEN YEARS later, the world of classical music has been turned upside down. Starting in the mid-80's, the forbiddingly complex late modernism of such composers as Elliott Carter and Milton Babbitt gave way to the accessible postmodernism of Philip Glass and his fellow minimalists. For the first time since the 1940's, the concertgoing public began to pay attention to new classical compositions. The music directors of several major American orchestras, including Michael Tilson Thomas of the San Francisco Symphony, Esa-Pekka Salonen of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Leonard Slatkin of Washington's National Symphony, now regularly—and successfully—program a wide variety of 20th-century music; according to a recent report in the *Times*, the San Francisco Symphony has scheduled performances of works by no fewer than fifteen living composers during its 1997-98 season.

The third edition of *The Lives of the Great Composers* faithfully reflects this sea change. The two pages devoted to "the new eclecticism" in 1981 have become a full chapter, and in other ways, too, Schonberg takes due note of the new situation in which music finds itself. In still other essential ways, however, the view he offers at century's end is continuous with the line he took up when he first began covering the American musical scene shortly after World War II. That line has its manifest weaknesses as well as its perhaps underappreciated strengths.

Not surprisingly—to begin with the weaknesses—Schonberg writes here with undisguised relish of the death of serialism:

> With all the *Sturm und Drang* associated with the three-decades-plus of serial music, it all ended with a whimper. After some 25 years of creation, of publicity, of polemics, of public-relations work, of numerous contemporary-music recordings—after all this, how many twelve-tone or serial works entered the ongoing repertory? [Alban] Berg's *Lyric Suite*, *Lulu*, and *Violin Concerto* (only parts of *Wozzeck* are serial) are the only three that spring to mind.

In fact, Berg's *Lyric Suite* is also only partly serial—an error which reminds us that too many critics of Harold Schonberg's generation rejected modernism without first considering it carefully, just as a later generation of critical enthusiasts would praise the worst excesses of the avant-garde with an equal (and opposite) lack of discrimination. Although it is quite true that twelve-tone music has failed to attract an audience, and many critics (myself included) would agree that the post-war emergence of serialism as the "international style" of classical music was a major disaster, it is another thing entirely to regard the entire modernist project as a historical aberration, which *The Lives of the Great Composers* comes close to doing. What other conclusion can one draw from the fact that both Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg—the antipodes of the modern movement—are portrayed as second-class composers who (to paraphrase Schonberg on Stravinsky) will be remembered more for what they did to music than for what their music did to their listeners?

Nor is Schonberg more illuminating or reliable when he comes to give an account of today's "worldwide flight from serialism." Among other things, he lumps the Polish "holy minimalist" composer Henryk Górecki together with the American minimalists Philip Glass, John Adams, and Steve Reich, casually dismissing them all as purveyors of what he calls the New Baroque:

* "Harold Schonberg and His Times," May 1980.

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> Part of the attraction of Baroque music was that one did not have to *think* while listening to it. Its excuse for being was that it wrapped the listener in innocuous sound, the busy patterns moving up and down without really ever saying anything. Diddle, diddle, diddle; diddle, diddle, diddle. . . . Thus it is with minimalism, except that it has even less harmonic adventure than the three chords of Baroque music.

One need not admire the minimalists to be dismayed by the extreme superficiality of Schonberg's discussion of their music—Górecki and Glass have approximately as much in common as Sergei Rachmaninoff and Richard Strauss—or, just as importantly, by his seeming ignorance of the fact that the end of modernism has been an epochal event not merely in classical music but throughout the whole of Western culture. Astonishingly, the word "postmodern" is nowhere to be found in the final chapter of *The Lives of the Great Composers*, nor does Schonberg make any attempt to relate the collapse of the musical avant-garde to similar events elsewhere (save for a brief and misleading comparison of musical minimalism with "pop art and op art").

No less striking is the fact that in revising his book, Schonberg appears to have had no second thoughts about anything. Dmitri Shostakovich has moved slightly upward in his estimation, and Benjamin Britten, referred to only in passing in 1981, now rates a full paragraph. Otherwise, there are no substantive changes of emphasis in the main text. Schonberg still thinks Stravinsky's reputation is inflated, and still has almost nothing good to say about any modern American composers besides Aaron Copland and (surprisingly) Charles Ives, or any modern English composers besides Britten and Vaughan Williams.

In short, Schonberg continues to hold a fundamentally premodern view of his subject, one in which the history of classical music consists in essence of the story of its canonical figures—the men who wrote the masterpieces. Most of these men turn out to be 19th-century Romantics, and over half the third edition of *The Lives of the Great Composers* is, appropriately, devoted to the Romantic era, starting with Beethoven and ending with Mahler. As for Schonberg's overall canon, with the exception of Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), who earned a new chapter in the second edition, no new members have been admitted since 1970. For Harold Schonberg, the book of musical life is closed.

AND YET, despite his narrowness and frequent anti-intellectualism, there is also something tonic about Schonberg's unswerving belief in a canon of musical greatness. To call this vision unfashionable is to put it mildly indeed: in music as in other areas of the culture, contemporary critics and scholars tend to disbelieve not only in the existence of great men, but in the very idea of greatness itself. But that is precisely why, with all his faults, Schonberg is worth taking seriously.

Characteristically, Schonberg responds to the contemporary point of view by ignoring it. Now as before, he unabashedly titles his book *The Lives of the Great Composers*, and writes as though no one had ever dared question their significance:

> The great composers always, one way or another, altered the course of musical history and have entered into, if not the consciousness of all humanity, certainly the consciousness of Western peoples. . . . Sometimes, as in the case of Mahler, it took two generations for them to become icons. But the great ones always have made their way, recognized as geniuses almost from the beginning. There is something Darwinian about the process. Perhaps survival of the fittest explains the great composers.

Moreover, Schonberg continues to be an optimist, to hold out the possibility—however slim—of stylistic renewal. In 1981, he suggested that what the new eclecticism lacked was "a genius on the order of a Berlioz or a Wagner who could put it all together"; today, he still bemoans the fact that "no leader . . . has emerged." Classical music, he implies, is not dead but merely sleeping, waiting to be awakened by a great man who will write great music and thereby show lesser men the way.

Is he right? It is worth pointing out that, however out of step Schonberg may be with the progressive-minded, his views happen to coincide with those of most working musicians, who continue to declare their own belief in greatness by regularly performing the music of the "powerful, individualistic composers" he writes about so passionately. Intellectual fashions come and go, but Bach, Schubert, and Wagner are with us still, and show no signs of disappearing into the dustbin of history.

Still, whether a new genius is among us now, busily writing scores that will change the face of music yet again, remains to be seen. It is possible that we are about to enter a new, "post-postmodern" period; it is possible, conversely, that Western music has reached "the end of history," and will no longer undergo major stylistic upheavals triggered by the innovations of protean minds. But as the 20th century draws to a close, surely it is no longer premature to speak of key figures of the modern movement—figures like Bartók, Berg, Britten, Copland, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and, yes, Stravinsky—as "great." Whatever the next century holds in store for classical music, it is hard to believe these extraordinary men will have no successors.

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Books in Review

Mad Cow Dept.

Deadly Feasts: Tracking the Secrets of a Terrifying New Plague
by Richard Rhodes

Simon & Schuster. 259 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Laura Manuelidis

WHEN I was a medical student in the early 1960's, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease was another obscure dementia, and kuru was a new and curious neurological illness afflicting tribesmen in New Guinea. Only one researcher, William Hadlow, had made the connection between kuru and an infectious sheep disease known as scrapie or the "scraping" disease. Other scientists explored different leads and troops of geneticists, epidemiologists, toxicologists, and entomologists foraged New Guinea in search of kuru's cause.

Richard Rhodes is thus quite justified to begin his saga in the lush vegetation of that island off Australia, and he includes exotic descriptions and dramatic photographs of both the geographic terrain and the human disease. Moving forward and backward in time, he proceeds to introduce the reader to an assortment of fascinating characters in one of the hottest mysteries of medical science—and to the possibility of a global epidemic that has already infiltrated or will soon infiltrate not only humans, primates, and cows but birds, fish, and, if you follow the argument logically, maybe even vegetables. The tale is told with the craft of a first-class mystery, and the criminal is exposed—that criminal being none other than the human race. Guilty of being carnivorous, we are justly punished when, as Rhodes puts it, "meat bites back."

HISTORY, WHEN presented by those who make it, is never free of bias. Rhodes's main source and central protagonist is the mischievous and intellectually omnivorous Carleton Gajdusek of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Something of a dramatic storyteller, Gajdusek is also described (by the Nobel prizewinner Macfarlane Burnet) as having "an intelligence quotient in the 180's and the emotional immaturity of a fifteen-year-old" and as a "maniacally energetic" scientist who inspires fierce enthusiasm in his staff. The charismatic Gajdusek charged his team at NIH and other collaborators to test Hadlow's prescient suggestion that the same type of infectious agent causes scrapie and kuru. At first a disbelieving, almost unwilling, participant, Gajdusek would be awarded the Nobel Prize in 1976 for the discovery that both kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease were transmissible to primates.

There is in all this a rich tale of scientific rivalry and even theft, not to mention early leads that went unrecognized. Rhodes tells it in part through the journals he unearthed of the anthropologists Robert and Shirley Glasse (the latter now Shirley Lindenbaum) who were the first to draw a formal link between

LAURA MANUELIDIS, *a new contributor, is professor and head of neuropathology at Yale University's School of Medicine. Her most recent study of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease appeared in July in* Science *(Vol. 277, No. 5322).*

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kuru and the cannibalism practiced by the New Guinea tribesmen. (Some of the locals seemed to be aware of the link through common sense.) Also briefly touched upon is the story of D. R. Wilson, who first serially transmitted scrapie in sheep and showed that the infectious agent was filterable (like a virus) yet not sterilizable by treatments that inactivate most viruses. For his original and unpublished experiments Wilson was ridiculed and died an outcast and broken man.

What, then, is the mysterious nature of the infectious agent? Rhodes concentrates on the theory of Stanley Prusiner that the culprit is not a virus, even an unconventional one, but a host protein—a "prion." The hitch is that this protein (PrP), when purified, is not demonstrably infectious. Moreover, several experiments that claim to show these agents' almost magical properties—including the fact that their complex structure survives heating to 700 degrees Fahrenheit—have been irreproducible or questionable. In the meantime, a multitude of slow and persistent viruses have been uncovered which employ devious strategies to avoid recognition by immune cells and can repair their own genetic material after damage. It is disappointing that Rhodes does not explore these different views in more detail.

While the argument over the nature of these agents remains unresolved, conveniently forgotten or ignored by most scientists is their ability, like that of other microorganisms, to cause epidemic disease. Experiments conducted by me and my colleagues at Yale in the 1970's on the transmissibility of Creutzfeldt-Jakob had shown that distant species could indeed be infected, and that the agents involved could acquire an altered range of hosts. Thus, in September 1989, after new agents were found in British cows that could potentially have an enhanced virulence for humans, I privately recommended the slaughter of all cattle on infected British farms (with full compensation for the farmers). Met by an opposing chorus of certainty, to the effect that the infection could not spread to humans ("it's just like sheep scrapie, and that's not a problem"), I asked if the British were prepared to watch as their population possibly dwindled away from an incurable and devastating disease. At least in terms of public health, would it not be best to take the most conservative approach—especially since, no matter what the agent was named, it invaded its hosts and behaved like a virus?

But the decision went the other way. The British, hoping the cow problem would politely disappear, spent millions building labs for containing recombinant but uninfectious PrP and little for culling cattle. (They did, however, limit the recycling of contaminated tissues.) I personally stopped eating British beef, recommended to my nephews in London they do the same, and, although sworn to secrecy by Britain's Medical Research Council, considered it imperative to get in touch with our Department of Agriculture (USDA) just in case we had been importing beef-derived food supplements. We had. Two cats had already been infected, but fortunately there were no known "mad cows" here. The USDA quickly instituted a ban on the suspect food supplements, and I kept my promise of no public disclosure until 1992, when two youthful farmers and two teenagers in England began to show symptoms of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. These cases are well-described by Rhodes.

Since the first sick cow was diagnosed in 1985, an estimated one million cows in the British Isles have become infected. It is on account of numbers like these that Rhodes closes his book with premonitions of widespread disaster. But there are others, on the opposite side of the spectrum, who declare with passionate intensity that there is no danger at all. The truth is that no one, not even the few of us who work with these infections, has any idea whether or not a new plague is upon us. Rhodes argues that "downer" cows in the U.S., i.e., cows unable to stand up because of illness, harbor the same infection as the British cattle, but I have not seen any firm evidence of this. If the new and extremely virulent British strain is here, it is not very prevalent. At the very least, this gives us a window of time to reevaluate our own practices and policies.

RHODES CONCLUDES *Deadly Feasts* by focusing on the governmental response to the epidemic and by recounting how human beings find ways to make use of every last remnant of their domesticated prey. His descriptions of this tend to be unappetizing, though they also show how marvelously inventive we are. Capitalizing on the dire predictions of some scientists, Rhodes leaves us with a picture of PrP converting and overtaking us like the "ice nine" in Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, a single drop of which turns the oceans into immobile crystal and brings human life to an end. But this scenario is infinitely less fascinating than the cunning strategies of nature itself, which biologists continuously discover. Moreover, anyone who has seen the scourge of protein deprivation in children as a consequence of poverty or neglect—or of rigid systems of belief—will find it hard to embrace Rhodes's implicit suggestion that we now all act to avert disaster by becoming fanatic vegetarians, rummaging for plants unreplenished by the return of protein. More useful, at least as far as medicine is concerned, would be to try to understand how to prevent and undermine these subversive infections—which have been with us for centuries.

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"[A] REASONED, BALANCED, AND COMPULSIVELY READABLE EXPLICATION OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH DILEMMA."

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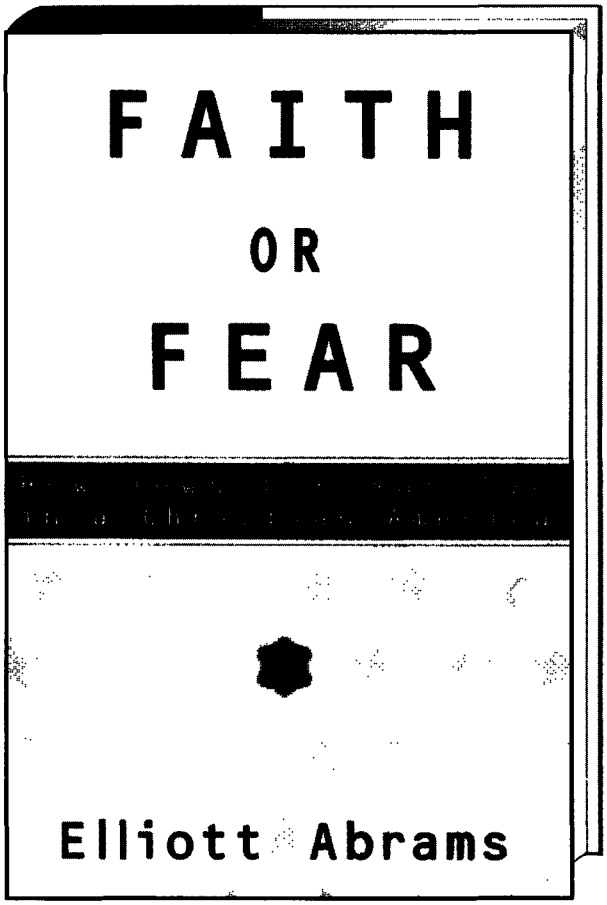

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The Syndrome Syndrome

Moral Judgment:
Does the Abuse Excuse
Threaten Our Legal System?
by James Q. Wilson
Basic Books. 134 pp. $18.00

The Excuse Factory:
How Employment Law Is
Paralyzing the American
Workplace
by Walter K. Olson
Free Press. 378 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Franklin Hunt

IN INCREASING numbers Americans have been resorting to ever more curious justifications for their bad behavior. Among excuses recently offered in court for criminal conduct, writes the renowned social scientist James Q. Wilson, are drug addiction, alcoholism, post-traumatic-stress disorder; battered-woman, battered-child, premenstrual-stress, and rape-trauma syndrome; also, the black-rage, XYY-chromosome, mob-mentality, different-cultural-background, pornography-addiction, steroid-use, urban-survivor, and rotten-social-background defense. Walter Olson, a scholar at the Manhattan Institute in New York, recounts even more indispositions from the realm of employment law, including: explosive-personality and uncontrollable-impulse disorder, brain shrinkage, caffeine dependence, chemical imbalance, fragile self-esteem, and (to excuse nonpayment of taxes) the failure-to-file syndrome.

In *Moral Judgment*, a book comprising his Godkin lectures at Harvard, Wilson examines the proliferation of novel criminal defenses and asks why they have made such headway. In particular, why do citizens who generally say they want to be tough on crime accept lame excuses for horrifying conduct as soon as they are sworn in as jurors? The explanation, as Wilson sees it, lies in changes in the law itself.

A century or more ago, a primary function of our legal system was to pass moral judgment on illegal behavior, and, through punishment, to foster self-control in both criminals and society at large. Extenuating circumstances were limited to insanity, duress, and self-defense. By the late 19th century, however, elite opinion about human nature began to shift; the focus turned away from assessing moral culpability to searching for the causes of criminal conduct, now thought to lie in social conditions like inequality and poverty. Over the course of the present century, as social scientists developed sophisticated theories to explain the origins of troublesome conduct, and reformers prodded to have these theories reflected in the criminal-justice system, the law has come to incorporate the view that if a defendant commits a crime out of anything but wholly unfettered choice, his degree of criminality should be reduced.

As Wilson shows, the transformation of American law that has been wrought is quite stark. At one time, for example, intoxication never excused a crime and mob frenzy aggravated it (which is why a sheriff would read the Riot Act to a dangerous gathering). Today, alcohol consumption or being caught up in a crowd might serve to show a defendant's "diminished capacity" to form the necessary intent to commit a crime. Likewise, if a defendant cannot offer the excuse of self-defense, which requires a showing of actual and reasonable fear for one's own life, he can now plead "imperfect self-defense" if his fear was real even though also unreasonable. Wilson illustrates all these developments with accounts of relevant cases, some of them well known, including Dan White's killing of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk (diminished capacity), the beating of Reginald Denny (mob frenzy), the Menendez brothers' murder of their parents (battered-child syndrome), and the New York City subway shooting by Bernhard Goetz (imperfect self-defense).

These cases make for sobering reading. But the encouraging news in Wilson's book is that in fact there has been no "avalanche" of successful abuse excuses. Not all courts accept such defenses (California and New Jersey provide a large share of Wilson's most egregious examples); a good number reject most of them; and even when and where they are allowed, arguments based on them do not always prevail. The black-rage defense did not save Colin Ferguson from a murder conviction for shooting white passengers on the Long Island Railroad. Similarly, defenses based on the XYY chromosome, pornography- and drug-addiction, steroid use, post-traumatic-stress disorder, and premenstrual-stress syndrome have also failed.

To return the courts more firmly to their traditional role of passing judgment and imposing punishment, Wilson suggests a number of commonsensical reforms. These include legislative review of case law to reverse the worst precedents; selection of juries by judges rather than by attorneys; and a greater reliance on independent experts in court. His simplest and most promising suggestion is that judges become more skeptical of the claims of social science, the vehicle by which the new doctrines have gained a foothold. As for the truly hard cases—women, for example, who kill their husbands after having been repeatedly battered—Wilson favors a greater use of executive clemency.

IN *The Excuse Factory*, a looser, more anecdotal, and perhaps more astonishing book than Wilson's, Walter Olson looks at a different part of the

FRANKLIN HUNT *is a New York lawyer who has contributed to* COMMENTARY *as well as to professional journals.*

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cultural forest. Over the past several decades, the erosion of the common-law doctrine of "employment at will," and the passage of new or the reinterpretation of old statutes like the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the several civil-rights acts, has created what Olson calls a "new" employment law. This law not only generates a flood of excuses for failings on the job, but has also transformed the workplace and labor market.

Employers are now severely limited in their ability to inquire into an applicant's qualifications and job background, and have been forced to revamp tests for members of "protected groups." At the same time, workers have been granted virtual ownership of their jobs, thanks to the expensive legal barriers that have been erected against firing for cause or age. Employers are also now compelled to eliminate any kind of "hostile" working environment and to accommodate workers with disabilities, including such mental illnesses as addiction and depression, not to mention other ailments from the growing list of unusual syndromes.

Olson believes that the new employment law will in time produce European-style rigidities in the labor market, with permanent high unemployment and a large measure of inefficiency and waste. All the more ironic, then, as he tells it, that the new laws have not helped their intended beneficiaries in any material way. Employment of the disabled, for example, has declined, particularly in the traditional categories of the blind, the deaf, and those who are confined to wheelchairs. One reason is that, since it is harder to prove improper hiring than improper firing, employers tend to avoid taking on workers from protected groups, especially for high-pressure jobs. The net effect is the creation of a zero-sum lottery in which a lucky few (and their even luckier lawyers) sometimes receive fabulous windfalls while the cost of employing everyone else rises.

But the real surprise of Olson's book concerns the ways being found to avoid many of the new law's rigidities. Small employers attempt to keep the number of their workers below the threshold at which the rules apply; this, depending on the statute in question, can range anywhere from fifteen to 100 employees. Some companies also make across-the-board reductions in their labor force to avoid having to justify the discharge of particular troublesome employees. More employers engage temporary workers. Perhaps most significantly, employers are factoring the higher costs of the new law into wages, thereby shifting the burdens to other employees. Thus does bad law not only fail to achieve its primary purpose, but creates ever widening distortions in our economic and social life.

A reader of these two absorbing books is left with a mixed impression. As long as judges continue to learn about new social problems from the popular press and—as James Q. Wilson writes—respond "quickly, magisterially, and inadequately," the abuse excuse will linger in our courtrooms. And as long as legislators, by large majorities and under no particular political pressure, continue to enact bills favoring victims of newly discovered maladies, the preposterous rules skewing the employment market will remain or get worse.

But there are already signs of an intelligent backlash against the abuse excuse and other legal absurdities, and one can only hope these books will bolster it. The com-

"Nathan Glazer...understands the present situation...clearly, and with an admirable sensitivity to what certain multiculturalists are trying to achieve...As Mr. Glazer shows in a fascinating chapter, the educational theorists (including John Dewey) who spoke of the American 'melting pot' were thinking almost exclusively of the European immigrants to this country; race, in their vocabulary, meant what we now call ethnicity. European-Americans could and would in time disconnect themselves from their country of origin and cease to be known as 'hyphenated' Americans. African-Americans were never included in this vision and were often treated by the theorists as if they simply were not there." —Mary Lefkowitz, WALL STREET JOURNAL

We Are All Multiculturalists Now

NATHAN GLAZER

"Glazer...is a distinguished social scientist and social critic...[This is a] densely packed book, the essential argument of which is that multiculturalism 'is the price America is paying for its inability or unwillingness to incorporate into its society African Americans, in the same way and to the same degree it has incorporated so many groups.'"
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pelling facts and arguments to be found in them suggest that reason and responsibility are not lost causes—at least, not yet.

Wanderers

Faith or Fear:
How Jews Can Survive in a Christian America
by Elliott Abrams
Free Press. 256 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Jon D. Levenson

THE GRIM data on Jewish assimilation and intermarriage that have called forth this book are by now well known. According to the National Jewish Population Study of 1990, most marriages involving an American Jew are exogamous. Other recent studies show that in families in which one originally non-Jewish parent has converted to Judaism, that parent is likely to be untroubled by the prospect that his or her children might reconvert to Christianity. As for the children of mixed marriages—i.e., those in which the non-Jewish spouse has not converted to Judaism—they tend, as Elliott Abrams points out here, "to accept something like a Christian definition of religion, in which personal faith is the key and community membership and solidarity are of much less importance."

In short, the very survival of the American Jewish community is in doubt. To the growing chorus calling for strong action, Abrams adds his own distinctive voice.

Much of this book is devoted to an analysis less of the sociological facts than of the thinking that helped bring American Jewry to its present pass and even now occludes a clear vision of the way forward. The history is instructive. Given the longstanding anti-Semitism of most believing Christians, and the social inferiority of most Jews, it is understandable that an earlier generation of Jewish leaders should have clung to the view that the U.S. Constitution required an uncompromisingly secular public order. Jewish organizations, themselves often staffed by Jews indifferent or hostile to traditional religious observance, came to identify the Jewish interest with Jefferson's "wall of separation" between church and state; most of them still do.

Paradoxically enough, however, this rigid separationism has served not to lower but to heighten the distinctive Jewish "profile" in American society. Moreover, it has ended up working, at least in some instances, against Jewish survival. Thus, in the celebrated Kiryas Joel court case (1994), establishment Jewish organizations urged that nothing of a public nature be done to accommodate the educational needs of handicapped children in a hasidic township in New York State, lest it breach the wall of separation. As Abrams nicely observes,

> The elements of the Jewish community having the greatest difficulty keeping their children Jewish used the courts to attack the practice by which the elements having the greatest success keeping their children Jewish were doing so.

Alongside their aggressively secular interpretation of the public order, American Jews have, in Abrams's words, "devised a variety of substitutes for Judaism" itself. But each of these substitutes, however praiseworthy on its merits, or as a means of expressing a peculiarly Jewish ethos, fails from the point of view of ensuring Jewish survival. The enormous communal investment in philanthropy, for example, "can provide the mechanisms for doing good works for fellow Jews, but it cannot provide a motivation" for remaining Jewish. Nor can the Jewish commitment to Israel, which is bound to dissipate as, with growing acculturation, "ties based on history and memory . . . fade." Nor, for the same reason, can the growing concentration upon the Holocaust. Finally, though many Jewish organizations find a kind of identity in resisting anti-Semitism, the data thankfully show this prejudice in steep decline, and hence a poor cement for the future.

With all the substitutes discredited, Jews, in Abrams's judgment, have but one recourse if they mean to survive: namely, to return to their religious faith. They must, in other words, practice Judaism, for "only Judaism can save the Jewish people, and . . . only Judaism provides a justification for doing so."

What does this mean? At a minimum, asserts Abrams, who calls himself a "somewhat observant Conservative Jew," it entails a rejection of the individualistic approach which "allows each Jew to pick and choose, cafeteria-style, within the Jewish tradition." Instead, even if all Jews do not become Orthodox, they should at least strive to emulate the example of the Orthodox, who have created a successful "counterculture" based on religious observance and day-school education. In an America that is itself, as Abrams seems to believe, becoming more religious and more conservative, this may even become an easier task than many Jews think.

A JEWISH religious revival in America would have important implications. To accomplish it, Abrams writes, most Jews would have to reorientate their attitude to religion in general, relinquishing not only their doctrinaire attachment to secularism but their unthinking suspicion of and bias against Christianity ("apparently the only form of prejudice that remains respectable in the American Jewish communi-

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ty"). In fact, such a change is quite warranted in his view, for, although most Jews do not know it, both the Roman Catholic and the mainline Protestant churches have renounced their traditional anti-Semitic theologies, and are no longer hostile to Jewish religious particularism.

The case of evangelical Christians is admittedly more complicated. On the one hand, Abrams has no difficulty disproving the common perception that evangelical or fundamentalist Christian beliefs are correlated with anti-Semitic attitudes. He also points out rich historical ironies, including the fervent support shown by evangelicals for the state of Israel, often in the face of liberal Protestant opposition. Much of the Jewish distaste for evangelicals, Abrams rightly concludes, has to do less with their religion than with their conservative social attitudes. Having mistaken the platform of the Democratic party for the Torah of Moses, Jewish organizations tend to think "that opposing views are not only conservative but also 'anti-Jewish.'"

On the other hand, Abrams acknowledges that "evangelicals too often fall short in their actual teachings about Judaism." He also strenuously objects to their habit of targeting Jews for conversion—a practice to which he himself was subjected while engaged in research for this book. But here, unfortunately, he is trying to have things both ways. Like their positive view of Israel, the felt mandate among evangelicals and fundamentalists to proselytize the people of the "Old Covenant" derives from their interpretation of the New Testament, which evangelicals (often) and fundamentalists (always) read in an ahistorical and uncritical fashion. In asking these groups to abandon venerable traditions, Abrams, somewhat like the liberal separationists he abhors, seems to be advocating a public order that will keep robust religion in check.

But there is another problem that runs throughout Abrams's engaging and generally clear-sighted book. At one point, he notes correctly that to be opposed to intermarriage is to stand in conflict with a traditional American ideal—namely, the ideal of "individual autonomy." He also mentions the French observer Michel Guillame Jean de Crèvecoeur, who as long ago as 1782 identified a "strange mixture of blood" as a characteristically American phenomenon. These facts being so, the challenge to Jewish survival may be much more deeply rooted in American culture and in the American past than the relatively recent developments that occupy Abrams's attention here—liberalism, separationism, and the various substitutes for religion in which American Jews have overinvested.

In this connection, it is strange that Abrams never draws a link, however partial, between the demographic disaster facing American Jews and the unintended cultural repercussions of the working of individual autonomy in the marketplace—to capitalism, in short, with its high estimation of personal choice, its distaste for collective identities and inherited status, and its belief that the customer is always right. All of these tenets are at odds with traditional Jewish law and theology (though, in an additional twist, they also happen to be advocated today by many who regard themselves as Orthodox). How Judaism's strikingly pre-modern concepts of the self and its obligations can be reconciled with the incomparable benefits of modern capitalism is a pressing question, and it is a pity that Abrams, an influential conservative activist, does not take it up.

"The good Jew is ritually observant and resists assimilation, in some sense living apart," Elliott Ab-

A Classic Work on America's Origins

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rams writes very wisely, "never fitting comfortably into American or any other society." It is a safe bet that in an America more conservative, more religious, less anti-Semitic, and less separationist than our present society, this would continue to be the case.

Revenge of the Nerd

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Reviewed by
Daniel J. Silver

DURING THE 1930's and 40's, the heyday of the American movie business, film production was dominated by the studio system. Everyone, from the lowest craftsman to the highest-priced star, worked on contract; whether you were a gaffer or a Garbo you were an employee. In-house stables of writers, working with their own ideas or with literary properties brought in from outside, created material in which to present the studios' stars, as well as plentiful "B" pictures to satisfy the genre tastes of various segments of the mass audience. The studios also controlled the exhibition of their movies in theaters which they owned and operated. They had the market to themselves.

The beginning of the end came in the late 1940's, when antitrust decrees forced the studios to divest themselves of their movie houses. This, combined with the growth of television, soon caused output at the "dream factory" to wane. Two statistics help tell the story. In 1939, Hollywood's most glorious year (which saw *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*), almost 500 films were produced in the United States; by 1959, the number had fallen to 200, a total which has never since been exceeded.

By the mid-1960's there were simply no longer any strong studios, with the possible exception of Universal—which had a lingering reputation as a schlock house. The others had been reduced to financial shells and passive buyers. It was in this situation that independent producers began to cash in and paved the way for a new breed of superagents. Most prominent among them was Michael Ovitz, who until his recent failed stint as Disney's president, was Hollywood's top talent agent and power broker.

In the mid-70's, breaking off from the William Morris talent agency to form Creative Artists Agency (CAA), Ovitz and his friends changed the way Hollywood did business. Their innovation was the "package deal," an arrangement by which an agency would sell to the studios a prefabricated collection of creative "elements"—writer, director, and star attached to a story idea and wrapped up as a unit. For Ovitz and company, this was a way to market many clients at once and to get a better price than any one client could separately command; for the studios, it was a way to reduce the search costs for putting together a film.

But the package deal had clear disadvantages as well. With "above-the-line" expenses—that is, money paid for the creative "talent," including stars—starting at tens of millions of dollars, a movie had to do extraordinarily well just to break even. To generate this kind of revenue, a film had to open as "wide" as possible—exhibited on thousands of screens—which in turn required extensive advance publicity to lure the public into the seats. And all these expenses had to be paid before even a single ticket was sold or a single dollar earned. These financial pressures demanded a new kind of film made by a new kind of director.

Enter Steven Spielberg. Though he did not become a client of Ovitz and CAA until the packaging of his all-time record breaker *Jurassic Park* (1993), Spielberg came of cinematic age in a Hollywood dominated by the new way of putting movies together, and he has been the most consistently successful creator of movies calculated to generate the broadest-based audience appeal. How he came to this mastery is a story told in two recent biographies, of which Joseph McBride's, for its original research, scrupulousness, and considered if overly earnest analysis, is much to be preferred.

SPIELBERG'S IS in many ways a classic tale of the "revenge of the nerd." He was born in Cincinnati in 1946 and grew up bouncing around from place to place as his father's engineering career took off along with the computer market. From an early age he felt awkward, ugly, and emotionally estranged. His mother, something of a suburban bohemian, divorced his father when Spielberg was in his teens.

Spielberg's father, an amateur photographer, tended to be aloof and wrapped up in his own work, but he did spark his son's interest in film, teaching him the rudiments of technique and encouraging him in his early moviemaking. But although the young man wrote and directed several accomplished amateur films while still in his teens, his academic grades were so poor that he failed to gain admission to any of the prestigious film schools—UCLA or USC or NYU—where other heavyweights like Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Brian De Palma, and Martin Scorsese were to learn the trade. Instead, he hung around the Universal studios, eventually getting funding to produce a short film, *Amblin*.'

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The movie impressed everyone who saw it, including Sidney Sheinberg, the head of Universal, who made Steven his protégé and arranged for him to begin directing on television. This proved too constraining a medium. The one TV movie Spielberg made, *Duel* (1971), won him a chance to direct a feature film, *Sugarland Express* (1974), starring Goldie Hawn and William Atherton, a critical success if a commercial flop.

Then Spielberg managed a coup: he got the assignment to direct *Jaws* (1975), based on Peter Benchley's immensely popular novel. As we learn from McBride, it turned out to be a horrendously difficult movie to shoot, yet Spielberg pulled the trick off, and *Jaws* became the highest-grossing film in history up till then. With this triumph under his belt, Spielberg went on to direct a whole string that broke box-office records, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1985), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Jurassic Park*, and now *Lost World*, the sequel to *Jurassic Park*, which is on its way to becoming another blockbuster. These hits have enabled Spielberg to negotiate extraordinarily lucrative compensation deals involving huge percentages of gross profits that have left him the wealthiest filmmaker of all time.

What exactly is the secret of his appeal? To some, like McBride and Vincent Canby of the *New York Times*, Spielberg is a kind of "poet of suburbia," a latter-day Frank Capra who evinces a peculiar intimacy with the psyche of middle-class America. Other critics, like Richard Corliss of *Time* and J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice*, see him far more darkly: as a consummate manipulator who produces his movies with cynical calculation, ripping off genre conventions and souping them up with other people's craftsmanship. In this view, even *Schindler's List*, Spielberg's film about the German industrialist who rescued his Jewish employees from death in the Holocaust, was an act of cynicism, a form of "Oscar-bait" designed to gain a level of serious recognition he had never received and does not deserve.

One need not subscribe to either school of thought to concede that Spielberg's films have never had much of anything to say (beyond their patently sincere and completely banal conviction that man is capable of inhumanity to man). His films do, of course, have a distinctive "look," but this should not be confused with vision. And while his technical panache is hardly to be disdained, much less his desire to

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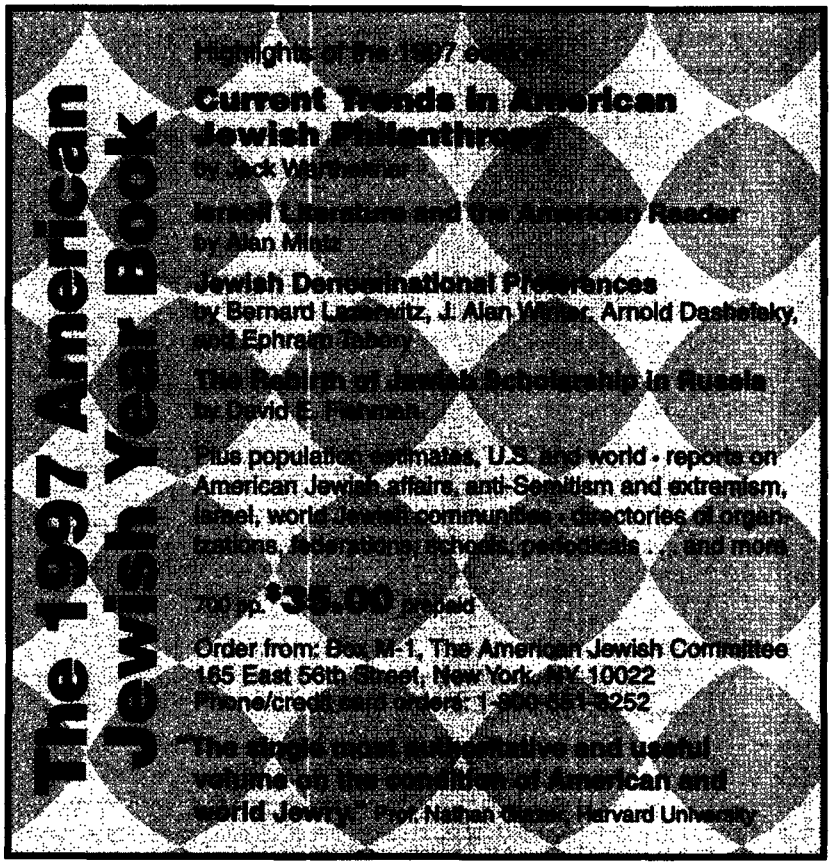
appeal to popular taste *per se*, the pleasure his films bring is, in the final analysis, narrowly circumscribed. Spielberg is a supremely effective visual storyteller who does not terribly care which tales he tells so long as they exercise mass appeal.

WHICH BRINGS us back to Hollywood's decline, a process in which Spielberg's form of almost machine-made movies has indubitably played a part. Today, budding screenwriters can take seminars and even buy software to help them write marketable stories *à la* Spielberg. Together with the devotion to "high-concept" gimmicks, the Spielbergian pastiche—old-time ideas covered with a glossy technical veneer—has invited some of the worst writing in the history of film. In such recent technological wonders as Jan De Bont's *Twister*, Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day*, Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element*, and Spielberg's own *Lost World*, not only is all logic thrown by the wayside, but dialogue and characterization are astoundingly leaden.

This points up another trait which is broadly shared in the new Hollywood: a complete lack of literary sensibility or regard for language. As Spielberg ruefully conceded a decade ago when he received the Motion Picture Academy's Irving Thalberg award, he himself was nurtured strictly on a diet of television and other ephemera of pop culture—surely a point of connection with his audience—and never enjoyed reading or had a feel for words.

In the heyday of the studio system, things were very different. The corridors were filled with sophisticated and spirited writers, often émigrés from Broadway or the European theater who were looking to make a living: figures like Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur, Billy Wilder, and Charles Brackett, not to mention the true literary artists who "slummed" aesthetically in Hollywood. When one recalls that many of these figures considered themselves sellouts for writing "hackwork," and then compares their screenplays with what is on offer today, one is struck with vertigo. We hardly need genetically-engineered dinosaurs to evoke a lost world; the Hollywood of yore is the genuine thing.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The Preacher

Just As I Am:
The Autobiography of
Billy Graham

HarperSanFrancisco/Zondervan
760 pp. $28.50

Reviewed by
James Nuechterlein

IT IS hardly a secret that nonbelievers are often alarmed by evangelical Christians and their ways; but evangelicals pose a problem even to many believers. The problem, in a nutshell, is their lack of irony. However skeptical of modernity a Christian believer may be, he cannot pretend not to have heard its message. Evangelicals, however, behave as if they have not heard the message—or, if they have, they adamantly refuse to pay it heed.

And it is not merely the absence of irony that can make evangelicals seem suspect. A flaunted humility that begins to look like its opposite; a tendency to find a convenient consonance between one's own will and God's purposes; an anti-intellectualism that parades as sublime faith—such qualities can manifest themselves with unsettling frequency in evangelical circles.

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On the evidence of his autobiography, Billy Graham himself is not entirely unmarked by these characteristics. But they touch him so lightly, and he fights them so valiantly, that the occasional hints of them which arise in *Just As I Am* serve rather to humanize than to condemn this most prominent of all evangelical preachers.

Graham, who was born in 1918, has been preaching the Christian Gospel his entire adult life. Raised a Presbyterian, he underwent his own born-again experience at the age of sixteen at a revival meeting in his native North Carolina. After being sketchily educated at Bob Jones College and the Florida Bible Institute, Graham took an additional undergraduate degree in 1943 at Wheaton College in Illinois, the Harvard of the evangelical world. He had in the meantime been ordained (after rebaptism) in the Southern Baptist Church. Although he served briefly as a pastor at a suburban Chicago congregation, he felt called from the beginning to a broader evangelistic ministry.

Starting with Youth for Christ in 1945, Graham gradually expanded his reach to general citywide "campaigns" (later "crusades") across the country. He first gained national attention with his Los Angeles campaign in 1949, when almost overnight—and aided by favorable notices in the Hearst newspapers and *Time* and *Life* magazines—he became the best-known Protestant preacher in America. Within a decade, he was generally acknowledged as the nation's most admired religious leader.

Over the years Graham's ministry became a global one. By now, hundreds of millions of people have heard him preach, and countless numbers have accepted his call to make a "decision for Christ." Much of today's broad evangelical empire—from radio and television programs to journals and publishing houses, schools for ministry, and the vast network of conferences and congresses—can trace its origins, directly or indirectly, to the efforts of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA).

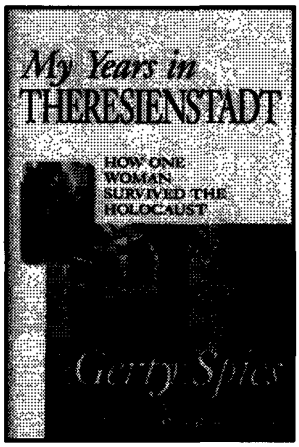
Of course, Christian faith is not simply about numbers, and there is in any case no way to measure the depth or endurance of the conversions Graham has elicited. But these are hardly the only terms by which to gauge his career. Unlike many similar enterprises, the BGEA has conducted its affairs without a hint of financial or sexual impropriety. Nor is there any question as to Graham's own integrity: he lives comfortably but simply, and he has adhered faithfully to a policy never to "travel, meet, or eat alone with a woman other than my wife." (Graham and his bride-to-be, Ruth Bell, exchanged their first kiss at the moment of their engagement in the summer of 1941.)

Graham has also largely avoided the harshness of tone characteristic of some evangelical preaching. Over time, the apocalyptic, millenarian message of his early sermons—reflected in his fierce anti-Communism in the late 40's and early 50's—has given way to a more winsome emphasis on God's mercy toward repentant sinners. Finally, he has never flirted with the anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism to which conservative Protestantism has historically been susceptible.

Not that Graham has been beyond criticism, or without critics. Over the years, some fundamentalists have suspected his ecumenical tolerance of liberal Protestants and even non-Protestants. Neo-orthodox theologians (like Reinhold Niebuhr) have judged his preaching simplistic and lacking in moral discernment. Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, and high-church Protestants, when they have bothered to acknowledge him at all, have found his ecclesiology and view of the sacraments sadly inadequate. Liberal Christians have criticized his emphasis on individual salvation and his comparative disregard of social issues. (Graham is indeed no social activist; but he has always opposed racial discrimination, and from the beginning, even in the South, insisted that his audiences not be separated by race.)

In the late 70's and early 80's, Graham was also attacked for allowing himself to be used for Communist propaganda purposes in his zeal to preach behind the Iron Curtain. Nor are these the only political grounds on which he has been broadly faulted. The most persistent criticism—and the one to which, in this volume, he shows the greatest sensitivity—involves his close, sometimes too close, relations with every occupant of the White House from Dwight Eisenhower on, and in particular with Richard Nixon. By providing, however unwittingly,

She has learned to forgive, but she can never forget. And neither can we.



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religious legitimacy for a string of Presidents whose eagerness for his counsel has been at least as much political as spiritual, it is said that he compromised his own credentials and reputation.

In his own defense, Graham insists here that his first concerns have always been spiritual, and offers poignant testimony that he has indeed offered succor for presidential souls. And yet he also concedes his errors:

> An evangelist is called to do one thing, and one thing only: to proclaim the Gospel. Becoming involved in strictly political issues or partisan politics inevitably dilutes the evangelist's impact and compromises his message. It is a lesson I wish I had learned earlier.

Political miscues aside, Graham, who is now seventy-eight and in failing health, has two major regrets about how he has lived his life. First, his frenetic preaching schedule left him less time than he now thinks necessary for study and meditation; although he never quite says so, one senses that barbs about his lack of theological depth continue to nag at him. Secondly, his almost constant travels meant extended, recurring separation from his wife and five children. Given what he took to be God's will for his life, he had no real choice in the matter, but his peripatetic ministry involved costs over which he expresses sorrow here. "The BGEA," he writes with some sadness, "became my second family without my realizing it."

Yet mainly Graham looks back in gratitude and wonder. From obscure rural roots in the American South, he has risen to become perhaps the single most respected world figure of the second half of the 20th century (a fact of which, in their invincible ignorance, most members of the intellectual elite are blissfully unaware). He has touched innumerable lives for the good, and in doing so he has remained—all necessary ambiguities acknowledged—good himself.

In *Just As I Am*, Graham practices the forgiveness and charity he preaches—somewhat, it must be said, to the book's detriment. A less irenic and forbearing work—and one less compelled to thank every person everywhere who has ever been of any assistance whatsoever to the author's work—would undoubtedly, for us sinners, make for more engrossing reading. But that is not Graham's way. A faithful and untiring preacher, he ends this book with still another invitation to readers who have not already done so to accept the message of the crucified and risen Christ. Even those who decline the invitation should be able to recognize the integrity and decency of the man who proffers it.

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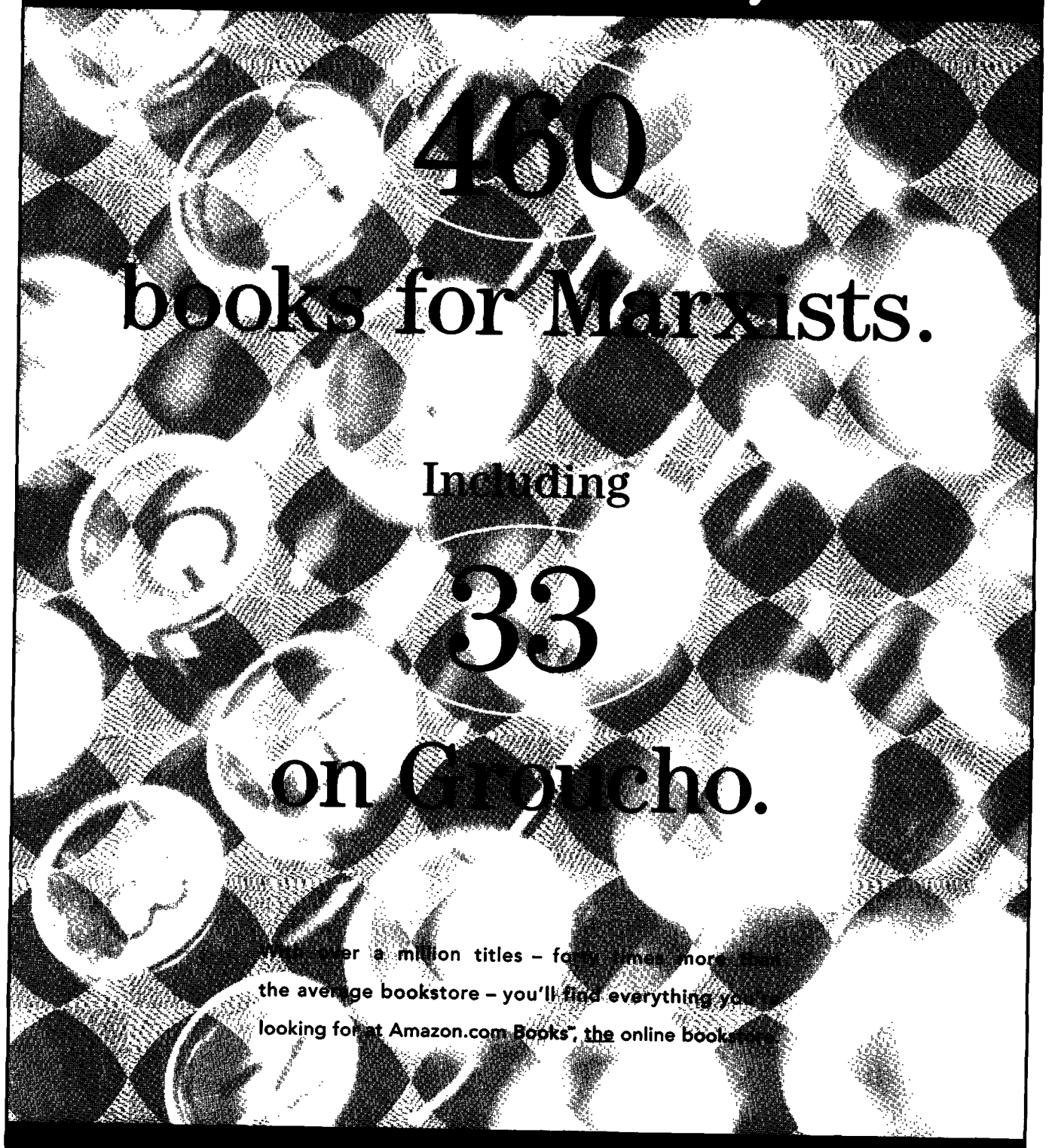
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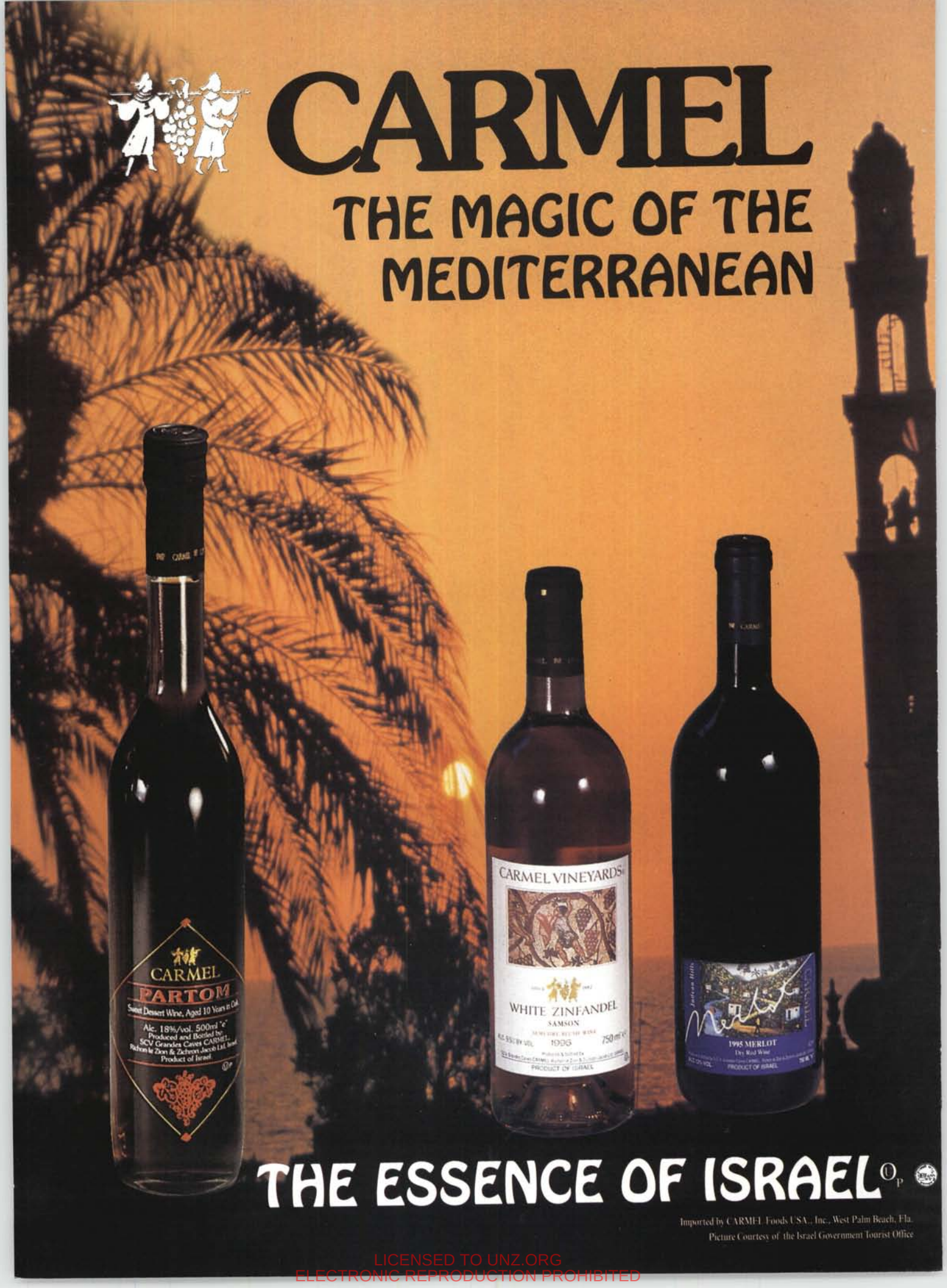

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